THE IMAGE OF GOD AND IDENTITY: IDENTITY FORMATION

IN EMERGING GENERATIONS

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For Dayspring, without whom this thesis would not exist. Thank you for encouraging me, challenging me, believing in me, picking up the slack for me, and kicking me in the pants when I needed it.

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The Image of the Invisible by Thrice[1]

We're more than carbon and chemicals.

Free will is ours and we can't let go.

We can't allow this, the quiet cull.

So we sing out this, our canticle: we are the image of the invisible.

We all were lost now we are found

No one can stop us or slow us down

We are all named and we are all known

We know that we'll never walk alone

We're more than static and dial tone.

We're emblematic of the unknown.

Raise up the banner, bend back your bows.

Remove the cancer, take back your souls: we are the image of the invisible.

Though all the world may hate us, we are named.

Though shadow overtake us, we are known.

We're more than carbon and chemicals.

Freewill is ours and we can't let go.

We are the image of the invisible.

1 AZ Lyrics, *Image of the Invisible* (London: Island Records, 2005), https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/thrice/imageoftheinvisible.html.

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ABSTRACT

The church today is at a crossroads: young people are walking away from the Christian faith in record numbers, not knowing God's kingdom story or their identities within the context of that story. The church must use this crossroads to approach discipleship in a radically different manner, leading young people to understand their identities within the context of God's kingdom story so as to provide them a solid foundation of faith that will outlast the doubts, questions, and challenges of extended adolescence. That solid foundation is found in the Christian identity, which is the image of God understood to be an identity-defining connection with God resulting in a purpose-defining reflection of God. All of Scripture points to Jesus Christ as the ultimate image of God who is the model, and the goal, and the enabler for all Christians who are being transformed into the image of God. This is the goal for emerging generations that the church must focus on to help ground young people in the Christian faith. This is done primarily through a discipleship process which understands the formative power of Christian practices to aim young people's hearts towards God and his kingdom. These identity forming Christians practices begin with a commitment to a covenant community, continue with disentanglement from cultural practices, climax with practices of the Christian weekly worship service, and conclude with the daily worship practices of the believer. All of this culminates in a practical and holistic plan which the church can put in place providing a good balance of structure and guidance to disciple emerging generations and help them grow into their God-given identity as the image of God.

CHAPTER 1: THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

Introduction

The church today is at a crossroads. Statistics tell us that 18-year-old to twenty-somethings are leaving the church in record numbers. Not only are they leaving the church, they are also walking away from the orthodox Christian faith, in favor of an individualistic "faith" of their own creation. Furthermore, these young adults are taking longer and longer to make the transition into adulthood, delaying many of the traditional adult responsibilities such as the establishment of a career, marriage, and child rearing. These young adults spend more time single and more time wandering before crossing the threshold into adulthood than any other generation before them.

It would be easy to blame the American culture, the academic system, pop culture or even the young adults themselves. Although blame may be the path of least resistance, it is not the answer. Furthermore, the aforementioned influences are only a part of a greater picture. For the church to be part of the solution, we first have to set aside blame and then seek to understand all of the issues involved. Then, and only then, can we begin to propose potential solutions to help 18 to twenty-somethings make a successful transition into adulthood in both life and faith.

The aim of this chapter is understanding. The overall goal of this study is to propose a solution that helps young adults make a successful transition into adulthood, especially in the Christian faith. This chapter first provides a brief survey of the history of adolescence and emerging adulthood in America, followed by an introduction to the key terms and phrases in the discussion. After a brief look at the positive and negative views regarding emerging adulthood, the eight defining characteristics of emerging adulthood are examined in an attempt to better understand this relatively new phase life. All of this leads to the focal point of this chapter, namely, the vital importance of identity formation through the process of individuation in the

young adult's transition into adulthood. Next, the problem of the patchwork self along with the cultural influences ensnaring young adults in extended adolescence is investigated. Chapters two through four will then begin the process of addressing solutions to the issues of identity in emerging generations.

History of Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood in America

Historically, the human life span has been divided into two stages: childhood and adulthood. When a "child" turned 16 years old in the late 19th century, without exception, he or she was considered an adult. At 16 years of age, adult responsibilities such as marriage, work and child-rearing were fully embraced. In the mid-twentieth century a new developmental stage between childhood and adulthood began to be recognized. This new stage, called "adolescence," began with the onset of puberty at roughly 13 years of age and lasted approximately five years, concluding at age 18 with the adoption of adult responsibilities such as work, marriage and child rearing.[1] However, as the twentieth century advanced, adolescence increased with it and eventually expanded into two sub-stages, early adolescence and late-adolescence. Instead of five years, it was taking longer and longer for adolescents to cross the threshold into adulthood. In the past couple of decades, adolescence lengthened even more so adding yet a third sub-stage: middle adolescence. Today, adolescence is broken down into these three sub-stages: early, middle and late adolescence. Early adolescence begins with the onset of puberty, approximately 11 or 12 years of age, and lasts until the adolescent is roughly 13 or 14 years old. Middle adolescence begins at 13 or 14 years of age and lasts until 17 or 18 years of age. Late adolescence then begins at 17 or 18 years of age and continues on sometime until the mid to late

1. Chap Clark, *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 7-8. This information has been taken and adapted from Clark's book.

twenties. Today, on average, it takes anywhere between 10 and 15 years from the beginning of adolescence for an adolescent to cross the threshold into adulthood. Not only that, the traditional markers of adulthood such as work, marriage, faith, and child-rearing have changed and are much more elusive and difficult to define, which further adds to the confusion.

Late adolescence is a developmental stage found predominantly in industrialized societies. The majority of experts agree that this stage begins at 18 years old and lasts into the mid-to-late twenties. These experts characterize this stage of life as a time of instability, freedom, exploration and discovery in education, occupation, relationships and ultimately in identity.[2] However, there is disagreement among experts as to whether this developmental stage of life is a sub-stage of adolescence or a completely separate developmental stage which adds even more confusion to the conversation. Regardless of the confusion, the most important role of the church is to impart an unwavering identity built on the foundation of faith for emerging generations.

Key Terms and Phrases

The newness of this developmental stage is evidenced in the disagreement among scholars and laypeople alike as they attempt to define and name the stage. Chap Clark, with whom this study aligns, breaks down adolescence into three phases (early, middle and late adolescence) thus concluding that the 18 to twenty-something stage of life is an extension of adolescence which now lasts into the mid to late twenties.[3] Others call this developmental stage young adulthood, proposing that 18-year olds to twenty-somethings are not quite adults but are

2. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 4, 45.

3. Clark, *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers*, ix.

no longer adolescents. According to this view, the phrase "young adults" captures the "already, but not yet" reality of this stage of life. Jeffrey Arnett, one of the leading scholars of this developmental stage, believes that titles like "extended adolescence" and "young adulthood" are condescending and unhelpful and thus proposes the name "emerging adulthood" as the best title to define this developmental stage. For Arnett, emerging adults have crossed the threshold into adulthood yet they are in the process of embracing that adulthood. In light of this, Arnett believes the phrase "emerging adults" is the best phrase to define them. He sees emerging adulthood as more than just a transitional period between adolescence and adulthood. In his opinion, it is a separate developmental stage of life and should be studied in like manner.[4]

Regardless of what this developmental stage is called, all scholars agree that the 18 to twenty-something has yet to fully embrace adulthood, therefore adulthood has yet to be reached. Thus, the phrases extended adolescence, young adulthood, and emerging adulthood ultimately all refer to the same developmental stage of life. With this in mind, these three phrases will be used interchangeably. A later section of this chapter contains further discussion in support of this conclusion.

Conflicting Opinions on Emerging Adulthood

Regardless of how people define and name this developmental stage, opinions are divided as to whether it is a positive or negative stage of life. Jean Twenge sums up the disparaging opinions perfectly with the title of her book "Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable Than Ever Before." Twenge, along with others, calls them narcissistic, lazy, technology-obsessed, selfish,

4. Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties*, 17, 20.

individualistic and coddled individuals who are aimless, working dead-end jobs while refusing to take on the full responsibilities of adulthood yet more entitled than any other generation in the history of the United States.[5] These critics support these conclusions by pointing to the statistics that emerging adults are marrying, having children and settling into careers later in life than the generations preceding them. Supposedly, it is the breakdown of central authority, moral absolutes and social norms that have led to a generation of people who value individual freedom above all else.[6] These critics have dubbed emerging adults "The Entitlement Generation," "Gen Me" and "Boomerang Kids," this last moniker referring to young adults' propensity to move back in with parents a second time after initially leaving home at the age of 18. James Cote in his book "Arrested Adulthood: The Changing Nature of Maturity and Identity" calls the 18 to twenty-something stage "youthhood" clearly revealing his bias.[7] Twenge even goes so far as to call young adults miserable, emotionally suffering through epidemic levels of depression, stressed and anxious, primarily due to their self-obsessed, narcissistic approach to life.[8]

On the other hand, others applaud the stage of emerging adulthood proposing that the self-centeredness, or self-focus, is developmentally appropriate due to the later age at which Americans differentiate and form individual identities.[9] It is not that young adults are lazy, irresponsible and selfish, rather they have a longer period of time than generations before them to

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5. Joel Stein, "Millennials: The Me Me Me Generation," Time, May 20, 2013, http://time.com/247/millennials-the-me-me-me-generation/. Stein does a great job summarizing the negative opinions on emerging adults.

6. Jean M. Twenge, *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled--and More Miserable than Ever Before* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 26-29.

7. James E. Côté, *Arrested Adulthood: The Changing Nature of Maturity and Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 4.

8. Twenge, *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled--and More Miserable than Ever Before*, 104.

9. Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties*, 13.

figure out who they are and what they want out of life. Young adults benefit from this extended time of freedom and exploration as it helps them discover and form an identity. Jeffrey Arnett goes so far as to propose that emerging adulthood is a great time for identity exploration and formation, specifically in the areas of work and love.[10]

Additionally, those who propose that emerging adulthood is a beneficial time of life point to their adaptability and resilience as they adjust to a vastly different world than their parents faced.[11] Yes, a fairly large percentage of young adults are living with parents, however they are not just freeloading but instead paying off debt and trying on careers that prepare them to enter a competitive world in which they are often the "first hired" and "first fired."[12] Additionally, they say that today's emerging adults are more educated and more committed to their communities and social justice than the generations before them.

The Final Evaluation

Regardless of one's opinion, it ultimately does no good to applaud or disparage the reality of emerging adulthood in America. This developmental stage simply just "is" and it is obvious it is here to stay. The bottom line is that there are both positive and negative aspects to this developmental stage. If the church is to help young adults establish a strong faith which lasts into adulthood, it is necessary to accept the 21st century reality of this stage of life and figure out how best to help these 18-year-old to twenty-somethings discover their God-given identity as

10. Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, 45.

11. Shelby Masters, "What Is Right with Millennials," *The Red and Black*, August 2015, accessed October 16, 2015, http://www.redandblack.com/views/what-is-right-with-millennials/article_6a32324c-490f-11e5-a183-4bc302456d60.html?mode=jqm.

12. Michelle Fitzsimmons, "The New 20-somethings: Why Won't They Grow Up?," *Salon.com* RSS, December 23, 2010, section goes here, accessed October 15, 2015, http://www.salon.com/2010/12/23/not_quite_adults_interview/.

they step into mature adulthood, regardless of whether we call them "extended adolescents," "young adults," or "emerging adults." In order to do this, it is necessary to take an objective look at emerging adulthood.

Defining Characteristics of Emerging Adulthood

Regardless of opinions on emerging adulthood, there are some defining characteristics of this stage that are universally agreed upon. In order to objectively understand emerging adulthood, this study will now take a look at emerging adults in eight main areas: biologically, academically, financially, vocationally, relationally (including living situations), emotionally and spiritually. In looking at these areas, it will become clear that one of the primary developmental tasks of young adulthood is identity formation, which paves the way for the transition to adulthood.

Biologically

Studies continue to support the findings that the frontal lobe of the brain is not fully developed in emerging adults until they reach the mid to late twenties. Because the frontal lobe oversees decision making, among other things, this has an obvious impact on emerging adults' cognitive ability and ultimately their decision-making. Psychologist Meg Jay, in her insightful book "The Defining Decade: Why Your Twenties Matter-and How to Make the Most of Them Now" cites studies which point to emerging adulthood as one of the two most critical times of life as far as neurological development is concerned, the other time being the first ten months of life.[13] According to Jay, emerging adulthood is a time where neural connections are forming and being refined at an exponential rate thus leading to quick learning and drastic changes in the

13. Meg Jay, *The Defining Decade: Why Your Twenties Matter and How to Make the Most of Them Now* (New York: Twelve, 2012), 136-139.

personalities of emerging adults. Jay advocates for young adults to actively engage the learning and growth process by seeking out learning and growth opportunities as it is a "use it or lose it" time of growth for those neural connections.[14]

The biological reality of the ongoing development of the frontal lobe in emerging adults is being acknowledged and affirmed in states like Michigan and Washington, among others, which are allowing certain convictions to be erased from the public records of early twenty-somethings or even issuing lighter sentences for young adults.[15] Furthermore, Florida, Michigan and New York have laws that allow for the convictions of young adults to stay confidential.[16] Lawmakers lobbying for this kind of leniency cite the same studies Jay does which provide evidence that the emerging adult's brain is still developing and growing much like an adolescent's brain. Proponents for greater leniency use these studies to argue that young adults are actually more like adolescents than adults because of their still developing brain. Practically, this results in a greater susceptibility to peers, a decreased ability to see the future and a less formed amygdala leading to emotional volatility and reactivity ultimately manifested in a lack of self-control.[17] The rapid developing frontal lobe of young adults is one of many indicators that identity formation is still underway and adulthood has not been reached.

Academically

14. Jay, *The Defining Decade*, 139.

15. Jameson Cook, "Young-adult Criminal Offender Law to Add 20-somethings," *Macombdaily.com*, July 07, 2015, accessed October 15, 2015, http://www.macombdaily.com/general-news/20150715/young-adult-criminal-offender-law-to-add-20-somethings.

16. Vincent Schiraldi and Bruce Western, "Why 21 Year-old Offenders Should Be Tried in Family Court," *Washington Post*, October 02, 2015, accessed October 16, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/time-to-raise-the-juvenile-age-limit/2015/10/02/948e317c-6862-11e5-9ef3-fde182507eac_story.html.

17. Schiraldi and Western, "Why 21 Year-old Offenders Should Be Tried in Family Court."

Overall, emerging adults see the value of a college education. Even though a college degree does not guarantee a good paying job, it is well known among young adults that those with a college degree are offered more money and more stability than those without. The importance of education is further evidenced in that emerging adults are more educated than their parents and grandparents before them.[18] The stats regarding college are fairly straightforward: two-thirds of high school graduates start college after graduation. However, one-quarter of these young adults drop out of college during the first year.[19] Experts believe this is due to a couple of factors, the first of which is financial. In the past few decades, the cost of a college education has risen to senseless heights. Add to this the findings that 60% of young adults hold a job in college and one-quarter of those work full-time jobs and you have a recipe for a very trying and difficult college experience in which young adults cannot fully devote themselves to their studies.[20] The second factor is a lack of maturity. Some emerging adults drop out of college because they are simply not mature enough to handle the freedom and responsibilities that are part of the college experience. This immaturity manifests itself in a lack of a commitment to studies and a lack of ability to nail down a life direction, thus an inability to commit to a degree which could lead to a career past graduation.[21] Few emerging adults have made a definitive choice of an occupation as they enter college and those that are less mature have a difficult time making it through the first year. It is also interesting to note that greater than 50% who enter college after high school fail

18. Herb Scribner, "Today's Young Adults Are the Most Educated Group in History," *DeseretNews.com*, August 10, 2015, section goes here, accessed October 15, 2015, http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865634217/Today7s-young-adults-are-the-most-educated-group-in-history.

19. Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties*, 119, 125.

20. Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, 127.

21. Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, 125-126.

to graduate with a four-year degree.[22] Lastly, unlike their parents before them, emerging adults are approaching college much like they are approaching adulthood, thus taking longer for them to graduate with a bachelor's degree. Instead of taking four years to graduate like their parents and grandparents, it is taking 5 or 6 years for young adults to complete a four-year degree.[23] This delay in graduation is due to many factors a few of which include a lack of money, having to work while attending college, and the frequent changing of majors due to the ongoing search for a topic of study which lines up with the emerging adult's continually forming identity.

Financially

While emerging adults are more educated than their parents, they are less financially stable than their parents at their age. They have more debt than any generation before them, the greatest of which is college debt. Students in the class of 2012 graduated with an average student debt of $29,400.[24] For the class of 2015, the emerging adult is weighed down by a little over $35,000 in debt.[25] Student debt, along with the astronomical cost of housing, results in a projected average retirement age of 75 for new college graduates.[26] Furthermore, many young adults are also weighed down by varying amounts of credit card debt. Despite the 60% of young adults working their way through college, it is not enough to handle the costs and luxuries of

22. Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood,* 141.

23. Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, 125.

24. Matthew Reed and Debbie Cochrane, "Student Debt and the Class of 2012," *The Institute for College Access & Success*, December 04, 2013, 1, accessed October 27, 2015, http://ticas.org/sites/default/files/legacy/fckfiles/pub/classof2012.pdf.

25. Sam Becker's article "Student Debt is a Barrier to Adulthood for More and More Millennials" records the amount of student debt at $35,000.

26. Arielle O'Shea, "New Grads Won't Be Able to Retire Until 75, Study Finds," *NerdWallet Credit Card Blog,* 2015, section goes here, accessed October 27, 2015, http://www.nerdwallet.com/blog/investing/millennial-grad-retirement-age-is-75/.

college life. Additionally, it is much more difficult for an emerging adult to find an adequately paying job immediately after graduation. Many recent college graduates are working dead-end jobs which pay minimum wage or they are working in unpaid internships where they are forming their identity and developing critical skills for their future careers yet are not taking home a paycheck. Today it takes the emerging adult considerably more time to find a job that is sufficient to pay off debt and monthly bills than it did 30 years ago. In 1980, the average worker earned the national median salary at age 26. Today, the average worker does not take home the national median salary until age 30.[27] As mentioned previously, many young adults are moving back in with their parents after college graduation, oftentimes to pay off debt, as they continue to search for a job which lines up with their identity and which will provide a paycheck sufficient enough to pay off debt and take care of monthly bills.

Vocationally

Like other key areas, the vocational life of the young adult is also marked by uncertainty, instability, transition, and constant change. The average American holds seven to eight different jobs between the ages of 18 and 30. One in four emerging adults have greater than ten jobs during this period.[28] Some attribute this in part to school budget cuts, which eliminated or severely limited career and/or guidance counselors in American high schools. Some even go so far as to say this is due to fatal flaws in the American education system and its focus on theory and test results as opposed to the student's individual success in school, career, and life. Regardless of the cause, it takes significantly longer for young adults to land in a career field

27. Quentin Fottrell, "40% of Unemployed Workers Are Millennials," *MarketWatch*, July 07, 2014, October 15, 2015, http://www.marketwatch.com/story/40-of-unemployed-workers-are-millennials-2014-07-03.

28. Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties*, 146.

than it did in previous generations. Many experts agree this is due to the identity discovery process. These young adults are spending the young adult years searching for a job that is consistent with their developing identity. The career aspirations emerging adults had as high school students dissolve, adapt, and often drastically change as identities continue to develop and form.[29] This process takes a lot of time and many experiences of trial and error.

Additionally, today's emerging adults do not just want to earn money, they also want to do something they love and enjoy. The majority of them would gladly sacrifice a larger paycheck to get up every morning and go to a job that makes them happy.[30] Lastly, they have seen the damage that focusing solely on work can do to one's life and, as a result, today's emerging adults value a good work-life balance. They realize that their identity is much more than a career, even as they are still in the process of discovering this identity and transitioning into adulthood.

Relationally

As with the vocational aspect of life, the relational aspect of the emerging adult's life is marked by instability and change. Their living situations are anything but stable as jobs, money, college, and love relationships dictate numerous moves. Also, the move back home with their parents for a period of time involves the redefining of relationships as they make the transition into adulthood in their relationships with parents. [31] When it comes to marriage, emerging adults spend more time single than any other generation, marrying an average of five years later than

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29. Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, 145-146.

30. Shana Lebowitz, "20-somethings Say They'd Give up a High Salary for a Job That Gets Them Psyched to Wake up in the Morning," Business Insider Australia, August 30, 2015, accessed October 15, 2015, http://www.businessinsider.com.au/20-somethings-value-job-fulfillment-2015-8.

31. Studies don't agree as to the exact percentage of 18-34 year olds living with parents but range between 25-35%. See Wargo's Huffington Post article and Lurye's PhillyVoice article for further information.

their parents. The average age for the first marriage in the United States is 27 for women and 29 for men.[32] This means more relationships and living situations prior to marriage as young adults walk the pathway to answering key questions of identity, including "What kind of person do I want to marry?" Arnett astutely points out that this lines up perfectly with Erikson's psychosocial stages of development. In Erikson's framework, the ego identity versus role confusion stage precedes the intimacy versus isolation stage. In Arnett's own words, "Only after forming a definite identity is a person ready to take the psychological and emotional risks involved in intimacy."[33] During this time, young adults can change direction often as new possibilities come along and as they continue to learn more about their interests and desires. Thus, it should come as no surprise that emerging adults have kids later than previous generations. They are simply taking longer to step into the responsibilities of adulthood as they look for answers to key questions of identity.

Emotionally

Emotionally, emerging adults are somewhat of a conundrum. When it comes to the future, they are replete with high hopes and big dreams for their careers, their relationships, their bank accounts, and their families. Jeffrey Arnett encapsulates young adults' idealism by writing, "The dreary, dead-end jobs, the bitter divorces, the disappointing and disrespectful children that some of them will find themselves experiencing in years to come—none of them imagine that this is what the future holds for them."[34] However, this does not mean that worry and fear are not

32. Eleanor Barkhorn, "Getting Married Later Is Great for College-Educated Women," *The Atlantic*, March 15, 2013, accessed October 27, 2015, http://www.theatlantic.com/sexes/archive/2013/03/getting-married-later-is-great-for-college-educated-women/274040/.

33. Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties*, 102.

34. Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood, 16.*

a part of their world. There are a number of worries that are unique to today's emerging adults. Financial issues are at top of the list of their worries. Paying off credit card and school debt, finding a job that pays sufficiently, living paycheck to paycheck, and wondering if they could ever afford a home are just a few of their financial worries. These worries are often compounded by the pressure of parents and other significant adults in their lives. Finding a potential spouse and avoiding the reality of divorce, which many of them witnessed firsthand as children, is another chief concern of young adults.[35] Today's emerging adults are also confused. Some of them are simply treading water because they have no idea how to take the next step on their pathway to adulthood. Meg Jay does a great job expressing this confusion: "They (young adults) were raised on abstract commands like 'Follow your dreams:' and 'Reach for the stars' but they don't know how to practically get these things done."[36] Furthermore, as they look towards the milestone of adulthood, they feel dread, reluctance or, at best, ambivalence. Adulthood seems to be more of a peril to be avoided than a goal to be pursued.[37] Adulthood represents responsibilities and a lack of freedom, which are directly antithetical to the emerging adult's way of life. Lastly, some who study young adults propose that they are emotionally struggling, overly stressed, highly anxious, and clinically depressed at unprecedented levels. These researchers point to the rampant rise of psychiatric drugs used to treat depression, ADHD, and anxiety as proof of this.[38] At this time, it is unclear whether these findings are a result of the emotional state

35. Jo Irwin's "Metro" article "20 Everyday Worries All Twenty-Somethings Will Relate To" does a great job of expressing these worries from the perspective of a twenty-something.

36. Jay, *The Defining Decade: Why Your Twenties Matter and How to Make the Most of Them Now*, 34.

37. Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties*, 6.

38. Jean Twenge writes about this extensively in her book *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled-and More Miserable than Ever Before*.

of young adults, the increase in the social acceptance of psychiatry and psychiatric drugs, or other reasons yet to be determined. Further studies are necessary for greater clarification in this area.

Spiritually

Arnett, in his book "Emerging Adulthood…" breaks down the spiritual or religious beliefs of emerging adults into four main categories. Those claiming to be agnostic or atheistic make up 22% of the population. Deists are 28% of the population. Liberal believers are 27% and conservative believers are 23% of the population.[39] While he describes their spiritual beliefs as diverse, there are a number of common threads running throughout the majority of emerging adults' spiritual beliefs which prove otherwise. First, and maybe most important of all, is the value of inclusivity.[40] The majority of emerging adults look down any spiritual belief or religion that claims to be exclusive. To claim that one religion is true and other religions false is tantamount to blasphemy for a large majority of young adults. Furthermore, and not surprisingly so, pluralism is a foundational value for their spiritual beliefs. Emerging adults of all spiritual beliefs have a strong tendency to "pick and choose" from both spiritual and secular beliefs and combine them together to form their own individualistic belief system. This leads us to yet another value of emerging adults' beliefs: individualism. Arnett defines individualism as "…guiding moral decisions on the basis of what is believed to be best for promoting individual growth, freedom and personal development."[41] It should be no surprise, due to the collective

39. Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties*, 167.

40. Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 115.

41. Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties*, 166.

nature of organized religion, that young adults are skeptical of organized religion and religious institutions.

Christian Smith takes Arnett's findings one step further, in his extensive study on the religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers and young adults. In his book "Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Live of American Teenagers," Smith coins the term "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism" to accurately describe the spiritual beliefs of adolescents and emerging adults. This belief system is succinctly summarized in five creedal statements. First, there is a God who created and orders the world and keeps watch over human life in that world. It doesn't matter what you call this God because different religions call him by different names. Next, God desires people to be good, nice and fair to one another as taught by the Bible and the majority of world religions. However, niceness and fairness are left to be defined by the individual. The third creedal statement ultimately flows out of the Declaration of Independence's unalienable rights of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." In all probability, the most important teaching of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is found in this third creedal statement, which affirms that the primary aim of life is to be happy and feel good about oneself. The fourth creedal statement focuses on God's involvement in an individual's life, positing that God is not particularly involved in one's life unless the individual needs him to help out with a problem. The fifth and final creedal statement deals with the afterlife and proposes that "good" people go to heaven when they die.[42] Once again, definitions are left up to the individual. Moralistic Therapeutic Deism functions in the background of emerging adults' lives as it does not ask too much from its' proponents. Arnett confirms Smith's findings by concluding "Most often, they end up in emerging adulthood neither Catholic nor Buddhist but as deists, with a blend of beliefs

42. Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, 162-163.

that emphasizes a common theme of honoring a higher power and trying to live a morally good life."[43] This emphasizes the importance of building a solid foundation of faith which emerging adults can question, challenge, and ultimately return to if they choose to wander.

Arnett makes an interesting observation about the spiritual lives of emerging adults citing evidence that they often return to the spiritual beliefs of their childhood as they transition into adulthood. Whereas there is little correlation between the spiritual beliefs of emerging adults and the beliefs inculcated in them during childhood, research suggests that many of them eventually return to the beliefs of their childhood as they transition into adulthood, get married and have a child of their own.[44] This makes sense with the identity formation process. As young adults are undergoing the psychological process of identity formation, it is natural for them to reject their childhood spiritual beliefs as they search to make a life for themselves. Just like every other area of the emerging adult's life, the search for spiritual and religious beliefs is part of the search for an identity as they undergo the transition into adulthood.

The Doorway to Adulthood: Individuation

What should be more than evident at this point is that the issue in emerging adulthood is first and foremost an identity issue, specifically the emerging adult's lack of an identity. Young adults are trying to answer basic questions of identity, like "Who am I?" and "Why am I on this earth?" These are key questions of identity. What used to be the primary task of the "traditional" adolescent years in order to make the transition into adulthood is now the key task of the 18 to twenty-something years.

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43. Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties,* 180.

44. Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, *177.*

Chap Clark builds on this in his book *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically About Youth Ministry*. He writes, "The primary and most basic goal of adolescence is known as individuation."[45] Individuation is the process of an individual becoming one's own unique person. While there is a first individuation process in the initial years of life, there is a second individuation as the adolescent transitions into adulthood. The process of this second individuation, heretofore to be referred to simply as individuation, is twofold. First of all, individuation involves the adolescent's breaking away from the identity and the role of a child. Throughout the first 10 or 11 years of life, a child's identity is constructed within the family and its' relationships.[46] As adolescence begins, the process of individuation begins. For an adolescent to become a unique person and transition into adulthood, he or she must begin separating from the child's identity and role and, ultimately, the family system in which that identity was constructed. This sets the stage for the second task of the process of individuation: the adolescent becoming his or her own interdependent, autonomous and differentiated person, also referred to as an adult.[47] According to psychologist and author David Elkind, the end result of an adult who has constructed his or her identity through individuation is an individual with a solid identity, independent of their parents; this identity cannot be lost even under the most difficult and trying circumstances.[48] This process also allows the individual to then reenter the family system as his or her own unique person with his or her own unique identity. Thus, individuation is the official doorway into adulthood.

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45. Kenda Creasy Dean, Chap Clark, and Dave Rahn, *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically about Youth Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Youth Specialties/Zondervan Pub. House, 2001), 47.

46. Dean, et. al., *Starting Right,* 47.

47. Dean, et. al., *Starting Right,* 47-49.

48. David Elkind, *All Grown up & No Place to Go: Teenagers in Crisis* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1984), 18.

According to Clark, there are three key tasks of individuation: identity, autonomy and reconnection.[49] The task of identity discovery is about finding an answer to the question "Who am I?" The task of achieving autonomy involves taking full responsibility for one's life and answering the question "Where am I going with my life?" Lastly, the task of reconnection is about achieving intimacy after the discovery of the unique self and answers the question "How do I now relate to others?"[50] Robbins not only supports Clark's statements on these three key tasks of individuation, he takes it a step further by stating that these tasks are successive in nature. Robbins writes, "When this crisis of identity is not met and mastered effectively, a young person will quite likely lack the kind of self-reliance and self-definition needed to seek out answers to the other key questions."[51] Simply put, an adolescent must answer the identity question before he or she can ultimately answer the autonomy question. Furthermore, the autonomy question must be answered before the reconnection question can be answered. All three questions are crucial in the extended adolescent's transition into adulthood. However, it is vital to remember that all three tasks hinge upon the first task of identity. This lines up perfectly with Erik Erikson's research and findings on identity and intimacy as seen in his eight psychosocial stages of development. Erik Erikson, the foremost scholar on identity formation, proposed that human development happens through eight progressive, psychosocial stages. According to Erikson, in the course of a lifetime an individual advances through each stage and only advances to the subsequent stage after the current stage has been "mastered." The two of

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49. Dean, et. al., *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically about Youth Ministry*, 54.

50. These three tasks have been taken and adapted from Chap Clark's *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically about Youth Ministry* and Duffy Robbins *This Way to Youth Ministry: An Introduction to the Adventure.*

51. Duffy Robbins, *This Way to Youth Ministry: An Introduction to the Adventure* (El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties Academic, 2004), 228.

Erikson's psychosocial stages most relevant to our current discussion are stages five and six. Stage five, identity versus identity confusion, is when the individual begins finding answers to the key question of identity: "Who am I?" In this stage, adolescents begin the process of both affirming and repudiating childhood identifications. If adolescents fail to do this, they end up forming a core disturbance aggravating and aggravated by either staying developmentally stuck or even developmentally regressing.[52] According to Erikson, when one has "mastered" stage five, they advance to stage six, intimacy versus isolation. This is the stage in which individuals learn to have healthy and intimate relationships built upon the foundation of their unique and differentiated identity.[53] Erikson, like Robbins, rightly affirms that one cannot have intimate, differentiated relationships when one has not established his or her unique identity.

Erikson, like the majority of 20th century psychologists and sociologists, proposed that this identity formation is done primarily during the "traditional" adolescent years setting up the transition into adulthood. However, what is clear from the previous section is this is no longer the case. This search for an identity through the process of individuation is now taking place primarily in the emerging adulthood years of 18 to the mid to late twenties. The eight defining characteristics of emerging adulthood confirm that identity formation is the primary developmental task of this stage of life. Arnett supports this by stating that the majority of identity work in the 21st century is no longer done in the "traditional" adolescent years of 12-18 but rather in the young adulthood years. [54] The wandering and searching of emerging adults are not laziness or avoidance; it is first and foremost a search for an individuated identity. Emerging

52. Erik H. Erikson and Joan M. Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 72.

53. I am indebted to Robbins for this understanding of Erikson's psychosocial stages as they relate to the process of individuation. See pages 226-228 of *This Way to Youth Ministry: An Introduction to the Adventure*.

54. Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties*, 9.

adults are simply trying to discover who they are and what their lives should look like in light of that identity. As they get closer to finding answers, they inch closer to adulthood.

In light of all of this, one can confidently conclude that emerging adulthood is not a new, separate developmental stage. Furthermore, emerging adults have not crossed the threshold into adulthood as Arnett so boldly claims. Developmentally, emerging adulthood is an extended adolescence. What used to occur primarily in the traditional adolescent years is now taking place in the young adulthood years. Whatever one chooses to call the 18 to twenty-something years, it is important to remember they are "traditionally" still adolescents who have not made the full transition into adulthood. They are in what sociologists and anthropologists refer to as a "liminal" state in which they are no longer children and not yet adults.[55] This "in-between" state of young adulthood is a transitional state in which young adults have left childhood behind and are now journeying towards adulthood, yet no longer fall into either category. Victor Turner, in his groundbreaking book *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* describes liminal beings as "neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial."[56] Furthermore, Turner goes on to describe the importance of what he calls "communitas" in this liminal state. This "communitas" is a temporary community where social structure is absent and there is nothing to distinguish one individual from another. Ultimately, there is a level playing field for the individuals who make up the liminal community.[57] All of this perfectly describes the state of young adults who are attempting to discover their identities and thus make the transition into adulthood. This "in-

55. Victor Turner and Arnold Van Gennep write about this extensively in their respective books *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* and *The Rites of Passage.*

56. Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (Chicago: Aldine Pub., 1969), 15.

57. Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 95.

betweenness" of young adults is key and it is important to keep in mind that they are neither children nor adults. Furthermore, while young adults need freedom and space to discover their identities, they also need structure and guidance and cannot be left completely on their own to accomplish the key tasks of individuation as they attempt to transition into adulthood. Just as we would not leave a 14-year-old to figure life out on his or her own, we should not leave a 21-year-old to do this alone. Young adults need developmentally appropriate levels of structure and guidance in their discovery process. They need a safe place, a shelter from everything in the American culture which attempts to lay claim on their God-given identities thus keeping them stuck in the liminal state of extended adolescence leading to more confusion and frustration.

The Enemy of Individuation: The Patchwork Self

Young adults engage one of two processes when it comes to forming an identity: growth by individuation or growth by substitution. As stated above, growth by individuation is a process that takes time and energy but eventually leads to a solid identity that signals the transition out of the liminal state of extended adolescence and into adulthood. Growth by individuation occurs when an adolescent becomes more independent, capable of drawing on his or her own internal resources.[58] Growth by substitution, or "the patchwork self" however, is the exact opposite. David Elkind describes growth by substitution as "merely replacing one set of concepts, feelings, or emotions for another."[59] This happens when the adolescent has little to no internal resources from which to draw so he or she has to draw from external, or substitute, resources in a

58. Madeline Levine, *The Price of Privilege: How Parental Pressure and Material Advantage Are Creating a Generation of Disconnected and Unhappy Kids* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 64.

59. Elkind, *All Grown up & No Place to Go: Teenagers in Crisis*, 18.

piecemeal manner.[60] This is why Elkind calls the self-constructed identity through substitution the "patchwork self." Ultimately, the patchwork self has no inner sense of identity to fall back on when it comes to decision-making so it looks externally to others to determine its values, attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs. This leads to an unpredictable and ever-changing self, influenced primarily by the surrounding environment. The young adult who forms an identity through substitution lacks a strong sense of identity and ends up imitating or substituting disconnected values, attitudes, behaviors and beliefs, much like a child adopts the values, attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs of his or her parents. The presence of the patchwork self is a clear indicator that an individual has not made the transition into adulthood and is still stuck in the liminal state of extended adolescence.

The young adult with the patchwork self is easily influenced by peers, respected authority figures and ever-changing fads and trends.[61] He tends to be self-focused and less able to postpone immediate gratification than a young adult with a solid sense of identity because he is focused almost solely on the present and how it can make him feel better about himself. Furthermore, he is extremely vulnerable to stress due to a lack of coping mechanisms. Oftentimes, he will revert back to childhood and even infantile coping mechanisms due to a lack of self-definition as an adult.[62] Additionally, the young adult with the patchwork self has chronic low self-esteem.[63] This makes sense, as there is no internal self and self-esteem is entirely dependent upon external factors including, but not limited to, success, failure, popularity, and

60. Levine, *The Price of Privilege: How Parental Pressure and Material Advantage Are Creating a Generation of Disconnected and Unhappy Kids*, 65.

61. Elkind, *All Grown Up & No Place to Go: Teenagers in Crisis*, 21.

62. Elkind, *All Grown Up*, 205.

63. Elkind, *All Grown Up*, 202.

rejection. The young adult with the patchwork self often ends up in a negative self-reinforcing feedback loop where he gets locked in patterns and behaviors that rob him of the time, tools and materials needed to construct a solid identity through the process of individuation.

What should be clear by now is growth by substitution and its resulting patchwork self is the enemy of individuation and the identity discovery process in young adults. In settling into the patchwork self, the young adult is kept from the process of individuation and ultimately prevented from discovering his or her God-given identity, precluding the transition into adulthood. While it seems simple enough for young adults to avoid constructing an identity through growth by substitution, unfortunately, growth by substitution is the path of least resistance when it comes to identity formation in the American culture. This is due, in large part, to powerful influences attempting to divert the identity formation process in young adults, keeping them stuck in extended adolescence.

Identity Confusion

There are many powerful forces in the lives of young adults attempting to lay claim on their identities and keep them stuck in an extended adolescence. This section lays out eight significant influences which may attempt to divert or hijack the individuation process and, as a result, create confusion regarding young adults' God-given identities. As will be evidenced, these influences have the potential of creating an environment lacking the safety, structure, and guidance necessary for the young adult's transition into adulthood.

Education

The adolescent's experience of education in America is often at odds with the adolescent's identity discovery process. Many psychologists attribute this to the external pressure that is placed on students by teachers, parents, coaches, and other significant adults in their lives.

Damon points out that the high academic expectations placed on adolescents pose problems for students because this high level of external pressure often disappears once students reach the university.[64] Furthermore, the sparse ratio of guidance counselors to students in American high schools is another example of the lack of commitment to assisting late adolescents in their identity discovery process.[65] All of this results in motivated, but directionless students who graduate high school confused, with only a general sense of what is next for them in life. William Damon writes about this extensively due to the results of his landmark study which revealed that only one-fifth of youth and young adults are thriving, with a clear sense of what the future holds, whereas the rest are either on the fence or completely aimless.[66] For the four-fifths that are not thriving, the result is differing degrees of disillusionment and disengagement among these youth and young adults.[67] All of this adds to the quantity of time spent in the unnecessary wandering and discovery of extended adolescence.

Additionally, large public schools and large class sizes are both overwhelming and often unhelpful in setting up mid-adolescents for a smooth, successful transition into late adolescence. As adolescents progress from elementary school to high school, schools get larger and larger and the student to teacher ratio grows with it. This means that as adolescents progress from early to late adolescence there is less adult guidance along with gradually increasing unknowns,

64. William Damon, *The Path to Purpose: Helping Our Children Find Their Calling in Life*(New York: Free Press, 2008), 14.

65. Timothy Pratt in his *Time.com* article cites the American School Counselor Association's statistic that there is 1 guidance counselor for every 471 students in the United States. In California, there is 1 guidance counselor for every 1,016 students.

66. Damon, *The Path to Purpose: Helping Our Children Find Their Calling in Life.*

67. Damon, *The Path to Purpose*, 15-16.

uncertainties, confusion, expectations and often danger.[68] This may have worked decades ago when high school students were successfully making the transition into adulthood and did not need as much adult guidance as they transitioned from lower to upperclassmen, but this is simply not the case today. Furthermore, today's American high schools are less an environment for healthy growth and identity discovery and, more often than not, a setting where drugs, sex, and violence run rampant.[69] David Elkind writes, "Both large schools and large classes not only have negative academic impact, they also provide an inhospitable environment for young people who are struggling to construct a sense of self and identity."[70] The bottom line is that the American school system often fails to provide a safe atmosphere for middle adolescents to figure out who they are and when these middle adolescents become late adolescents in their late teens and early twenties, they are more lost than ever struggling to become adults. Many of them are just trying to survive.

Additionally, whether explicitly stated or implied, the message for upperclassmen high school students is "The best college is the ultimate goal. Anything else is failure." Jeffrey Arnett emphatically claims that college is the ideal environment for young adults to discover and form their identities. However, college immediately after high school is not the best route for all young adults attempting to discover their identities. For many Americans the cost of college is far too expensive to spend valuable resources in the work of identity discovery. Additionally, the identity discovery process is secondary in college as the focus is on academics, which is, at best, a small part of identity formation in young adults. The majority of colleges fail to provide

68. Elkind, *All Grown Up & No Place to Go: Teenagers in Crisis*, 169.

69. Elkind, *All Grown Up*, 166.

70. Elkind, *All Grown Up*, 166.

enough intentional structure and guidance for identity discovery in college. This is made evident in a few statistics cited earlier. First, 25% of high school graduates who enter college drop out in the first year. Next, greater than 50% of people who begin college fail to obtain a four-year degree. Statistics also reveal that the college students who stay in school change their major multiple times in their search for an identity, and ultimately an occupation, that lines up with the identity discovery process. Additionally, it is common knowledge that a college degree no longer guarantees an economically viable job. Of the 50 percent of young adults who graduate college, many graduate with massive debt and end up working at Starbucks or another low paying job as they try and figure out who they are and what they want to do with their lives. This is enough evidence to point to the reality that college is not the ideal environment for all young adults in the identity formation process. For many emerging adults, it is far more sensible to get a head start on the identity discovery before throwing exorbitant amounts of money at a college degree that may or may not be an identity fit. Despite his explicit claim, Arnett's research supports this simple truth. A common sentiment among emerging adults in their mid-twenties is "they were too immature at age 18 or 19 to apply themselves to educational goals in college, and consequently their early college years were wasted."[71]

Yet another problem with education in America is the college admissions process. The pressure upper classmen experience in high school is unrealistic, and oftentimes harmful. On average, these students are burdened with over three hours of homework every night, in addition to the numerous extracurricular activities required by the college application process.[72] Those

71. Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties*, 126.

72. Julie Lythcott-Haims, *How to Raise an Adult: Break Free of the Overparenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success,* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2015), 57.

students taking AP courses, due to their greater impact on GPA and the value colleges place on them, end up with even more hours of homework and more pressure. The PSAT and SAT standardized tests are further evidence of the broken college admissions process. There is well-known criticism that universities purchase PSAT results so they can send brochures to students they have no intention of admitting so as to boost the school's number of applicants, which then subsequently boosts their ranking in the U.S. News and World Report's college rankings.[73] Additionally, since the college-prep industry brings in millions of dollars each year, admissions deans take issue with the SAT because, on some level, it does not measure aptitude but rather one's ability to study for the test, which is more about wealth than academic ability.[74] The broken college admissions process was highlighted recently when 50 people were arrested in the biggest college admissions scam ever prosecuted. The arrests included coaches and athletic directors from some of the nation's top universities and colleges along with wealthy, and in some cases famous, parents who bribed officials to get their children into these top colleges. All of the parents were accused of paying over twenty-five million dollars in bribes.[75] All of this exposes a broken college admissions process "in which a rich high school learning experience is sacrificed for test scores, and a healthy childhood and young adult development is sacrificed for a corrupt and false ideal."[76]

73. Lythcott-Haims, *How to Raise an Adult,* 135.

74. Lythcott-Haims, *How to Raise an Adult*, 135.

75. Alanna Durkin Richer and Collin Binkley, "TV Celebrities and Coaches Charged in College Bribery Scheme," The Washington Times (The Washington Times, March 12, 2019), https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2019/mar/12/college-coaches-others-indicted-in-admissions-brib/.

76. Lythcott-Haims, *How to Raise an Adult: Break Free of the Overparenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success*, 138.

Lastly, the American school system and its accompanying values has completely cast aside the young adults Elkind calls the "forgotten half."[77] The forgotten half are the 50% of high school students who do not go to college or end up dropping out shortly after starting. Elkind astutely and powerfully writes, "We are so focused upon the academic that we do not value the skills and abilities of those people whom we rely upon in our everyday lives: the plumbers, electricians, carpenters, painters, and auto mechanics, not to mention the service people in stores, restaurants, and offices."[78] While these are much needed professions in American culture that are identity fits for many young adults, they are often looked down upon as second-rate jobs for people who are not smart enough to handle the rigors of the "preferred" college experience. This is a disservice to 50% of young adults who are trying to discover their God-given identity outside of the college experience. The "forgotten half" end up stuck in adolescence lost and wandering without guidance and structure to assist with the individuation process which would successfully help them make the transition into adulthood.

Pressures, Expectations, and Helicopter Parenting

The external pressure that adolescents face today is unparalleled. They are pressured on every side from peers, parents, coaches, tutors, and teachers. With the ultimate goal of getting into the best colleges in the nation, adolescents are expected and pressured to get straight A's, take numerous AP classes, play sports, perform music or drama, join clubs, do community services hours, get high PSAT and SAT scores, and complete unreasonable amounts of homework every night. Not only is there not enough time for a unique identity discovery

77. Elkind, *All Grown Up & No Place to Go: Teenagers in Crisis*, 166.

78. Elkind, *All Grown Up*, 170.

process, the adolescent's identity is often hijacked by those setting the expectations. All of this interferes with the identity discovery process and ultimately, the transition into adulthood.[79] Not all expectations are damaging, since appropriate expectations create appropriate structure and guidance for young adults as they transition into adulthood. However, many adult expectations are about their own insecurities, desires and dreams than about a concern for the identity formation process in youth and young adults themselves. Expectations that refuse to acknowledge the adolescent's individuation process to form a healthy sense of identity must be released if we are to support youth and young adults in their transition into adulthood.

Helicopter parenting is another expression of the unreasonable expectations and overwhelming pressure that adolescents face. Helicopter parenting, or "invasive" parenting as Marano calls it, is not limited to the early or middle adolescent years.[80] In the late adolescent years, a helicopter parent is one who is overinvolved in the daily decision-making of a young adult. There are endless scenarios for this kind of parenting but examples include parents who call a professor to argue a low grade on behalf of their young adult, parents who text their young adults every day to "check-in" to ensure they are fulfilling their responsibilities, and parents who call work on behalf of their young adults to demand they get time off for a family event. Helicopter parenting creates an unhealthy dependence in young adults, locking up the individuation process and keeping them stuck in an extended adolescence.

External pressures, expectations, and helicopter parenting are detrimental to the young adult on a number of levels. First and foremost, they create a constant level of anxiety and stress

79. David Elkind and Madeline Levine write about this extensively in their books *The Hurried Child: Growing up Too Fast Too Soon* and *The Price of Privilege: How Parental Pressure and Material Advantage Are Creating a Generation of Disconnected and Unhappy Kids* respectively.

80. Hara Estroff Marano, *A Nation of Wimps: The High Cost of Invasive Parenting* (New York: Broadway Books, 2008).

in daily life that can very rapidly lead to depression. David Elkind writes "…today we lose as many or more adolescents through stress-related behaviors. Stress-related death, disease, and injury among teenagers constitutes the new morbidity."[81] Lythcott-Haims cites a 2013 study conducted by the American College Health Association which surveyed one hundred thousand college students from 153 different campuses and the results are sobering. 84 percent of those students felt overwhelmed by their responsibilities and almost 80 percent felt exhausted. 61 percent felt very sad, 57 percent felt very lonely, 51 percent felt overwhelming anxiety, and 47 percent felt hopeless. She attributes the majority of this to the external pressures adolescents face.[82]

Ultimately adult pressures, adult expectations, and helicopter parenting disempower young adults and create the feeling that they are not in control of their lives.[83] In a series of studies conducted by William Damon, adolescents and young adults report "an inner life of anxiety and a sense of feeling trapped in a life that is not under their own control."[84] Oftentimes, the end result of this is a victim mentality in which young adults fail to take responsibility for their lives and blame their behaviors and circumstances on external factors or forces. Taking responsibility for one's life is the second task of individuation, the task of achieving autonomy. Thus, pressures, expectations, and helicopter parenting keep young adults from progressing in the identity discovery process, trapping them in an extended adolescence.

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81. Elkind, *All Grown up & No Place to Go: Teenagers in Crisis*, 22.

82. Lythcott-Haims, *How to Raise an Adult: Break Free of the Overparenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success,* 88.

83. Psychologists call this an external locus of control.

84. Damon, *The Path to Purpose: Helping Our Children Find Their Calling in Life*, 10.

The Self Esteem Movement

This generation of young adults grew up in the midst of the self-esteem movement. Psychiatrist David Sack in his Huffington Post Article entitled "Could Your Child Have Too Much Self Esteem" summed it up perfectly: "'I'm good enough, I'm smart enough and doggone it, people like me.' Once good for a late-night laugh courtesy of *Saturday Night Live's* satirical self-help show called 'Daily Affirmation with Stuart Smalley,' this catchphrase could sum up the thinking of an entire generation."[85] Since the early years of their childhood, young adults have been taught hollow aphorisms like these with the goal of building self-confidence, yet the result was more often than not, self-importance. Jean Twenge goes so far as to state that the self-focused nature of these sayings created narcissism in an entire generation.[86] Regardless of the truth of Twenge's conclusion, the self-esteem movement, although well intentioned, failed because its proponents failed to realize that self-confidence comes from achievement as opposed to empty adages.[87] Meg Jay astutely writes,

> Confidence doesn't come from the inside out. It moves from the outside in. People feel less anxious—and more confident—on the inside when they can point to things they have done well on the outside…Real confidence comes from mastery experiences, which are actual, lived moments of success, especially when things seem difficult. Whether we are talking about love or work, the confidence that overrides insecurity comes from experience. There is no other way.[88]

85. M.D. David Sack, "Could Your Child Have Too Much Self-Esteem?," *The Huffington Post*, August 23, 2012, section goes here, accessed November 12, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-sack-md/children-self-esteem_b_1822809.html.

86. Twenge, *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled--and More Miserable than Ever Before*, 55.

87. Twenge, *Generation Me*, 188.

88. Jay, *The Defining Decade: Why Your Twenties Matter and How to Make the Most of Them Now*, 159.

Another set of hollow aphorisms young adults have repeatedly heard are sayings such as "You can do anything you put your mind to," "The sky is the limit," and "You are a blank canvas" when it comes to their future, implying infinite choices of what they can do and who they can become. Not only is this not true, it is harmful for young adults' identity discovery process, offering relatively little structure and guidance for them as they attempt to become adults, resulting in a longer than necessary transition into adulthood. Jay cites "the Jam Experiment," a classic psychological study confirming that too many options result in overwhelm and paralysis in decision-making. When young adults understand their future options are limited based on their own unique talents, experiences, passions, knowledge-base and skills, it actually encourages proactivity in decision-making in the identity discovery process by narrowing decisions and thus eliminating overwhelm.[89]

The Postmodern View of Identity

In the modern worldview, the focus is on what reality is and how we can know that reality. This is why the scientific method is so central to the modern mindset. Furthermore, the modern human identity is seen as an integrated, stable, fixed, and developing in set stages. However, the cultural shifts of secularism, industrialization, and urbanization led to an alteration of the fundamental questions humans ask about reality.[90] The focus became no longer on what reality is, but rather how language constructs meaning. James W. Sire, in "The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog" writes, "there has been a shift in 'first things'

89. Jay, *The Defining Decade*, 35-37.

90. Marie Hoskins and Marla Arvay, "Researching the Postmodern Self: Implications for Constructivism," Constructivism in the Human Sciences 4, no. 1 (September 1999): pp. 13-36, http://dtl.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/docview/204488864?accountid=10143, 18.

from…knowing (modernity) to constructing meaning (postmodernity)."[91] In postmodernism we cannot know objective reality about our world or ourselves because we have no access to reality apart from the way in which we represent that reality in our concepts, language, and discourse. Therefore, everyone has a reality and there is no way for us to determine an ultimate reality outside of our own constructions.[92] The conclusion is that we live in a reality we have constructed.

The postmodern view of identity formation follows suit: one's identity is constituted in and through language.[93] Postmodernism is marked by a rejection of totalizing explanations, including explanations of human identity.[94] This means that identity has unlimited possibilities and is no longer fixed but rather fluid in nature and allows for an individual to have multiple, conflicting identities at the same time.[95] If identity is a construct of language, our identity is not something we discover, it is something we create and thus it is constantly evolving. Furthermore, this assertion results in an identity crisis because a person becomes an infinitely malleable self that can take on an indefinite number of identities. People now exist in a continuous state of construction and reconstruction where anything goes. We are whatever we construct ourselves to

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91. James W. Sire, *The Universe next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 175.

92. J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh, *Truth Is Stranger than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 32.

93. Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 1996), 130.

94. Steve R. Baumgardner and Leon Rappoport, "Culture and Self in Postmodern Perspective," The Humanistic Psychologist 24, no. 1 (1996): pp. 116-139, https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org.dtl.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/08873267.1996.9986845, 126.

95. Roger Frie, "Identity, Narrative, and Lived Experience after Postmodernity: Between Multiplicity and Continuity," *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*42, no. 1 (2011): pp. 46-60, http://dtl.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/docview/873571802?accountid=10143, 46.

be.[96] Cote expands on this describing the relational nature of postmodern identity creation: "With belief in a 'real self' gone, people turn to a belief in a relational self. All is played out in relation to others, even the construction of one's identity—indeed everything about the world and existence."[97]

The end result is the displacement of human identity with a plurality of self-images which are self-constructed and even contradictory.[98] Postmodern identity is a theoretical expression of the multiplicity of the self with shifting identities and a lack of an integrated and cohesive identity. At its most basic level, this is the kind of image management that often defines the everyday world of social media. At its most advanced level, it denies the basic Biblical truth that human beings were created specifically and uniquely in the image of God. In promoting the idea that we have an infinite number of choices when it comes to our identity, the postmodern view of identity removes the structure and guidance necessary for the individuation process. This keeps young adults stuck in some form of adolescence, resulting in an inability to move forward in the identity discovery process.

Mass Media

Over the past couple of centuries, there have been a number of key influences which have directed the identity formation process central to the transition into adulthood. Cote breaks them down into five main influences. In the 1800's, family and religion were the main influences in this transition. Education became yet another influence in the mid-1800's. As religion and family

96. Middleton and Walsh, *Truth Is Stranger than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age*, 53.

97. Cote, *Arrested Adulthood: The Changing Nature of Maturity and Identity,* 104.

98. James J. Dowd, "Social Psychology in a Postmodern Age: A Discipline without a Subject" 22, no. 3/4 (1991): pp. 188-209, http://www.jstor.org.dtl.idm.oclc.org/stable/27698581, 205.

began to decline in power in the 1900's, the state became more influential. However, one of the most powerful forces guiding the identity formation process today is the mass media.[99]

Cote rightly claims that mass media affects identity development in young adults on two primary levels. Behaviorally it is a time drain that prevents young adults from pursuing other activities where they could learn more about themselves. Psychologically, the content of mass media exposes young adults to ways of thinking that ends up influencing and altering values, ideologies and the choices they make.[100] Cote writes, "Now we are deep into a society dominated by a mass culture…of which TV is but one important part, that caters to people's lower and lazier natures…"[101] This mass consumption of pop culture leads to what Cote calls a passive acquiescence when it comes to identity formation. Instead of actively engaging the identity formation process, many young adults are unwittingly accepting the messages of pop culture. The result is young adults who are adopting an identity by substituting or imitating the attitudes, values, behaviors and beliefs of mass media. For the most part, this substitution and imitation is devoid of any true identity work. This is not true transformation of oneself from a late adolescent to an adult; rather it is merely the donning of a costume that will eventually be shed in favor of another "more hip" costume, at the leading of mass media. The end result is the patchwork self. Unfortunately, this tends to be a downward spiral. The weaker one's sense of identity, the more vulnerable he or she is to manipulation at the hands of the mass media and the more likely he or she is to get stuck in adolescence as the identity formation process continues to be impeded.

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99. Côté, *Arrested Adulthood: The Changing Nature of Maturity and Identity*, 163-164.

100. Côté, *Arrested Adulthood*, 60.

101. Côté, *Arrested Adulthood*, 78.

One might object that young adults are less influenced by mass media because they are older and more able to discern mass media messages. However, this is contrary to the research on young adults who are still late adolescents in the thick of the identity formation process. While it is true that teenagers were the major target group of mass media in the mid 1900s, there are two segments of youth targeted today by the mass media: those in their teens and those in their twenties.[102] Most, if not all, of pop culture is consumer-driven. Intentionally targeted marketing to teens and young adults is a lucrative business estimated at approximately 300 billion dollars per year.[103] In this case there is guidance and structure, however this structure and guidance is guiding young adults away from the doorway to adulthood and straight into the creation of the patchwork self.

Adults

In looking at the harmful effects of mass media on the individuation process, it is important to remember that mass media and pop culture are the creation of adults. Cote astutely writes, "Clearly, the statistical evidence is available for the deleterious effects of certain forms of media viewing. Yet, what is the adult community in America doing about it? The media are the creation of adults, adults specifically target groups such as the young with their programming and advertising, and adults buy television sets and related media for their offspring…"[104] He continues on to ask two revealing questions: who is ultimately responsible and who is to blame? Cote's questions are obviously rhetorical.

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102. Côté, *Arrested Adulthood*, 169.

103. Côté, *Arrested Adulthood*, 174.

104. Côté, *Arrested Adulthood*, 61.

Additionally, young adults today experience a lack of adult presence and guidance in their lives. Chap Clark goes so far as to say that adults who have the experience and power to help adolescents with the transition from adolescence into adulthood have ultimately abandoned adolescents of all ages.[105] According to Clark, this abandonment is systemic. Clark writes, "we as a society have allowed the institutions and systems originally designed to nurture children and adolescents to lose their missional mandate."[106] Practically, this abandonment is evident in the daily, weekly and monthly agendas of adolescents. These agendas are marked by meetings, practices, games, classes, homework, school events, community service, academic trips, and other expectations mostly placed on them by adults. Instead of spending time with the adults closest to them, adolescents are left in the presence of yet another adult hoisting yet another set of expectations on them. The end result is that the adolescent is left all alone to make the transition into adulthood. Clark sums it up perfectly: "The adolescent must therefore struggle to find an identity without the benefit of this supportive adult envelope."[107] In response to this systemic abandonment, the adolescent is forced to survive through the creation of fragmented, or patchwork, identities that change as rapidly with the adolescent's changing environment. These "multiple" identities define an adolescent's behavior as they move from setting to setting and person to person.[108] All of this is about survival, as there are few, if any, adults to guide them in the identity formation process as they transition into adulthood. This is perfectly summed up in Clark's own words: "To survive, a young person must learn how to be a child, a student, an

105. Clark, *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers*, 3.

106. Clark, *Hurt 2.0*, 20.

107. Clark, *Hurt 2.0*, 26.

108. Clark, *Hurt 2.0*, ix.

athlete, and a friend, while also continuing the ever-lengthening process of determining who he or she is."[109] Cote supports Clark's statement as he blames this developmental delay completely on "a lack of guidance from the generations now in their adult years."[110]

Part of the problem may lie in the lack of identity formation transpiring in adults. Cote writes: "With respect to 'identity formation,' it appears that only a small proportion of adults (20-30%) reach what researchers believe is the optimal level of self-directed identity formation appropriate to the demands and opportunities of contemporary American society…"[111] A well-known leadership maxim states, "As goes the leader, so goes the followers." This is true of identity formation in young adults. If Cote is right and a large percentage of American adults are stuck in the identity formation process, it is only natural that the younger members of the community will likewise become stuck developmentally. Therefore, with young adults, we are merely getting what we are: people who are not growing up, undergoing individuation and fully transitioning into adulthood through the process of individuation.

The Church

The Christian church in America is not immune from this and is reaping the effects of failing to help adolescents through the process of individuation and the transition into adulthood. The church is virtually indistinguishable from the world in this area. Adolescents who are raised in the church and entering young adulthood face the same issues listed above, which all interfere with the identity discovery process. Furthermore, the statistics of the number of high school graduates leaving the church, and ultimately the Christian faith, is just one telling example of

109. Clark, *Hurt 2.0*, 2.

110. Côté, *Arrested Adulthood: The Changing Nature of Maturity and Identity*, 79.

111. Côté, *Arrested Adulthood*, 46.

this.[112] This is due, in part, to the fact that we often tell them what to think about their identity instead of teaching them how to work through identity issues, assisting them in their search for an individuated identity. Christian programs and colleges designed to help young adults in this transitional time often end up attempting to indoctrinate young adults into a way of thinking as opposed to teaching young adults to do the identity discovery work themselves and then giving them the context in which to do it. Many Christian colleges, training programs, Bible schools and gap year programs provide so much structure and teaching that students lose the freedom necessary to engage in the identity discovery process. What is most troubling about this is that the church has the answers and the context in which to wrestle through the three fundamental questions of the individuation process, as the Christian's identity is rooted firmly in the image of the creative and redemptive God in which he or she is created.

Lastly, we can logically conclude that young adults in the church are stuck in extended adolescence partly because of the adults who lead, attend and make up American churches. The absence of significant adults in young adults' lives along with the lack of evidence of sufficient individuation and self-directed identity formation in over 70% of American adults, both of which are mentioned above, results in a substantial lack of structure and guidance for these young adults as they struggle to cross the threshold into adulthood in both life and faith.

Disappearing Markers

In 21st century America there are few markers, or rites of passage, indicating that one has become an adult. In the past, agreed upon markers, or rites of passage, denoted the transition from adolescence into adulthood. Some of these markers included an 18th birthday, getting hired

112. Burke, Daniel. "Millennials Leaving Church in Droves, Study Says - CNN.com." *CNN*. May 14, 2015. Accessed October 27, 2015. http://www.cnn.com/2015/05/12/living/pew-religion-study/index.html.

for that first full-time job, high school graduation, trade school graduation, college graduation, marriage, or buying a home for the first time. These events still exist but as the culture has changed, and adolescence has lengthened, these events have lost their meaning as significant markers in young adults' transition into adulthood. There are two significant problems with the disappearance of these markers in the lives of young adults.

First, markers of adulthood provide structure and guidance for the young adults themselves indicating what is expected of them depending on which side of the marker they fall. Most young adults do not think they are full-fledged adults. In some ways they feel like adults, in other ways they still feel like adolescents. Furthermore, they have no markers to provide structure and guidance in order to answer the questions of whether they are adults, what it takes to become adults, and when they will become adults. As a result, it should come as no surprise that they can simultaneously act like both an adolescent and an adult. Cote further explains, "Without adequate structure and guidance, people tend to be confused or lose their sense of place in society. They tend to take longer to become "mature" members of the human species…"[113] This is exactly what has happened to young adults.

Second, markers of adulthood provide structure and guidance for adults either limiting or increasing the demands for maturity in young adults depending on which side of the marker they fall.[114] The disappearance of markers has not only left young adults in the dark about who they are and how they should behave, it has also left the adults in their lives in the dark. The absence of markers is not only confusing for young adults, it is also confusing for the adults in their lives. Markers offer rules, limits and prohibitions that people can internalize to guide their behavior

113. Côté, *Arrested Adulthood: The Changing Nature of Maturity and Identity*, 136.

114. Côté, *Arrested Adulthood*, 113.

and thus allow them to make age-appropriate decisions.[115] Without markers to provide structure and guidance, the expectations adults place on young adults are arbitrary and oftentimes either too high and unrealistic or, on the other hand, not high enough. This leads to confusion, frustration, and even anger for both the adults and the young adults. All of this also has a negative impact on the identity formation process in young adults. Elkind sums it up perfectly: "Given the importance of markers for our sense of becoming, we should be concerned at their disappearance."[116]

Summary

This chapter began by providing a brief survey of the history of adolescence and emerging adulthood in America along with an introduction to the key terms involved in the discussion. After this, both positive and negative views of emerging adulthood were presented followed by the eight distinct qualities of young adults. All of this led to the focal point of chapter one, namely, the vital importance of identity formation through the process of individuation in the young adult's transition into adulthood. After this, the problem of the patchwork self along with the influences ensnaring young adults in extended adolescence were explored. All of this naturally leads to the thesis of this study.

Thesis

The church must help emerging generations grow up in life and faith. While Chapter One addresses the sobering realities of extended adolescence as it relates to identity, Chapter Two focuses on a Biblical and theological understanding of identity formation in Christians,

115. Elkind, *All Grown Up & No Place to Go: Teenagers in Crisis*, 113.

116. Elkind, *All Grown Up*, 113.

specifically as it relates to the image of God. If we are going to understand who we are as Christians, we must start with our Creator for it is in His image that we have been created. The image of God is the Christian's identity. We must start here. Once we understand the goal of Christian formation, it is natural to turn to the practical application. Chapter Three, the literature review section of this thesis, will address the "how" of Christian formation into the image of God. Chapter 4, the project design of the thesis, flows from previous three chapters and puts all of the research into a practical plan so the church can provide enough structure and guidance to assist emerging generations grow into their God-given identity as the image of God. The project design includes four main parts: crucial elements of the model, an overview of the model, research methodology and evaluation of the results. Finally, chapter 5 will address the outcomes of this study. This program will take years to see through to the end. Taking this into account, it is not possible to fully implement and evaluate this program within the time frame of this study. However, this chapter will analyze the results of one area of research along with proposing potential areas of future study.

CHAPTER 2: THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The question "Who am I?" is a fundamental question all humans ask. Young adults, whether they realize it or not, ask this question repeatedly in their journey towards individuation and adulthood. Their search for the answer to the question "Who am I?" is evidenced in the myriad of relationships, friendships, living situations, and jobs they move in and out of. Young adults are merely trying to find answers to this question through these relationships, friendships, living situations, and jobs. Old Testament scholar Bruce Waltke reveals just how significant each individual's answer to this question is: "Our self-identity is the window through which we perceive and engage the world; it determines all we do."[1] Since this is true, it is critically important that the church assist emerging generations in their search for answers to this question.

Historically, the quest to understand human identity is primarily limited to the fields of psychology and sociology. Scholars have leaned heavily on the research of Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, and Erik Erikson to understand identity development. In the past few decades, John Bowlby's research on attachment theory had a greater influence on the understanding of human development and identity formation.[2] While these researchers and the fields of psychology and sociology have much to offer this study, they leave investigators without a solid foundation to build on resulting in a fluid human identity that is far too easily determined by external factors including, but not limited to, biology, social forces, cultural influences, and family dynamics without a solid foundation on which to build. Even scholars like

1. Bruce K. Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 13.

2. Duffy Robbins does an admirable job of summarizing the research of these scholars in chapters 6 and 7 of his book *This Way to Youth Ministry: An Introduction to the Adventure.*

Kohlberg, Piaget, Bowlby, and Erikson agree that identity development in humans is structured following some kind of order or design. While they do not point to scripture or a supreme being, there is implicit in their findings the notion that "human development, with all of its myriad complexities, cultural differences, and historical contexts, follows a predictable, discernible pattern."[3] This is where scripture enters into the picture offering its readers a big picture perspective on human identity and identity formation. Just as the Bible is not a scientific textbook providing its readers with scientific answers, the Bible is not a sociology or psychology textbook. The Bible is the mega-narrative, or grand story, of the kingdom of God irrupting into this world and establishing the rightful king's rule over all of creation, for our joy, others' good, and God's glory.[4] However, this mega-narrative does speak to issues of psychology and sociology, especially when it comes to human identity.

From the first chapter of scripture, we are given the defining characteristic of human identity in the phrase "the image of God." While it is true that external factors play a vital role in influencing human identity, there is a reality regarding human identity that precedes any and all external factors. Genesis 1:27 beautifully sums up this reality with the words, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."[5] The theological construct of "the image of God," or the "imago Dei," is foundational to understanding human identity and identity formation. At the foundation of the thesis of this present study is a simple truth: humanity's creation in the image of God is at the core of human identity. Not only that, the imago Dei is also the goal, or destiny, of human maturation;

3. Robbins, *This Way to Youth Ministry: An Introduction to the Adventure*, 186.

4. Bruce Waltke in his book *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* does an amazing job of laying out this theme of the irruption of the Kingdom of God.

5. *Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2001).

ultimately it is where identity formation begins and ends for the Christian. More specifically, the thesis of this study is that the image of God is an identity-defining connection to God resulting in a purpose-determining reflection of God throughout the entire earth.

Before delving into the specifics of this thesis, it is important to set the stage by understanding the big picture. Thus, this chapter begins by examining the power of stories, particularly in their ability to shape and form identity. The conclusion is that for the Christian, the ultimate story of God and his kingdom should hold primary sway over identity formation. After this, a few paragraphs are devoted to a brief overview of the most popular evangelical theologies of the imago Dei. Historically, there have been many attempts to understand the theology of the imago Dei, however they tend to focus on questions of human attributes or functions as opposed to questions of human meaning and identity. The majority of this chapter is then devoted to understanding identity formation within the context of God's ultimate story. Specifically, this is accomplished by a detailed analysis of the theological construct of the image of God as understood within the context of the story of God and his kingdom. The story of the imago Dei in the context of God's ultimate story is examined in three movements: creation in the image of God, the subversion of the image of God, and re-creation in the image of God which climaxes with the realization of the image of God. In each of these movements, the identity-defining connection of God resulting in the purpose-determining reflection of God will be analyzed in detail. As we understand the image of God in the context of the story of God, it becomes more than evident that the image of God is at the core of Christian identity formation and maturation.

Identity and The Power of The Stories

Defining "Story"

Stories can be incredibly powerful especially in relationship to identity formation, especially when those stories are loaded with an ultimate narrative of who we are and why we are here.[6] In this case, stories are a word, or words, we tell ourselves which have the power to form our identity. A story does not have to be traditional three-act story to be categorized as a story; it can be a sentence, or even a word.

The Power of Stories

Stories have great power in the identity formation process. Stories have the power to form identity by reminding us of the past, serving as a compass for our future, constructing our worldviews, and asserting an identity-forming authority.

First, stories remind us of our past. Bruce Waltke, in his brilliant book "Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical and Thematic Approach," posits that identity is formed by two factors: memory and destiny. In writing about the power of the past to shape identity, he astutely points out that memories of our past inform who we are, thus shaping our self-understanding.[7] Merle Jordan hones in on this, writing about the power of past stories told in our family of origin: "People are anchored in the personal stories and histories we inherit from a family origin…Our realities, our understanding of God and our understanding of our own identities are largely determined by the stories and relationships of our families of origin."[8]

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6. James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, a Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2016), 46.

7. Waltke and Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach*, 13.

8. Merle R. Jordan, *Reclaiming Your Story: Family History and Spiritual Growth* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 3.

However, regardless of the origin of these past stories, their innate power is seen throughout humanity. Many people live their lives haunted by past stories which remind them of their identity as a loser, a failure, unwanted, unattractive, unsuccessful, or undesirable. Others, live their lives driven by past stories which remind them of their identity as successful, wealthy, influential, beautiful or religious. Regardless of the actual stories, Waltke's words about the identity forming power of our past memories rings true for both individuals and communities—without memory, there is a loss of identity.

Next, stories serve as a compass for our futures. Waltke addresses this in the second half of his sentence: "Memories of our past inform who we are, shape our self-understanding*, and give us a vision of our destiny, and that vision of hope moves us forward, forging our will and determination*."[9] This vision of the future could be one which is colored by negative past memories resulting in a discouraging, and an ultimately hopeless destiny. However, many times this vision of the future is what Smith calls "our telos" which he defines as "…what we want, what we long for, what we crave." He further describes it as "…a vision of 'the good life' that we desire."[10] While the concept of telos will be discussed in much more detail later on in this and the next chapter, it is important to keep in mind that these stories become the compass we follow as we look towards the future; they are our hopes and dreams for a better tomorrow and they have great power to shape our identity.

Third, stories are the building blocks we use to construct our worldviews and these worldviews hold a powerful influence over our identities. In his book "Creation Regained:

9. Waltke and Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach*, 13. Emphasis mine.

10. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit,* 11.

Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview," Albert Wolters defines a worldview as "the comprehensive framework of one's basic beliefs about things."[11] He continues on to describe the power of a worldview:

> A worldview, even when it is half unconscious and unarticulated, functions like a compass or a road map. It orients us in the world at large, gives us a sense of what is up and what is down, what is right and what is wrong in the confusion of events and phenomena that confronts us. Our worldview shapes, to a significant degree, the way we assess the events, issues and structures of our civilizations and our time.[12]

Worldviews are intimately linked to humanity's telos as they are formed through stories that claim to be ultimate stories answering the big "Why?" questions humans have been asking for thousands of years about origins, life, death and morality. This alone reveals the power of worldviews to shape identities.

Finally, and most importantly, our stories assert authority. The stories humans embrace as ultimate stories pull back the curtain to reveal which authorities have been given the power to define our pasts, our worldviews, our futures, and thus ultimately our identities. For every story embraced as an ultimate story there is an authority, and there are many authorities attempting to establish themselves as the ultimate voice on human identity. Many of these authorities were discussed and illustrated in detail in Chapter One but they could be boiled down to some broad categories including family of origin, school, parents, pop culture, the world, friends, teachers, and the church.

As we have seen, stories are powerful: they have the power to form identity by reminding us of the past, serving as a compass for our future, constructing our worldviews, all the while

11. Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2005), 2.

12. Wolters, *Creation Regained,* 5.

asserting their authority. Merle Jordan perfectly sums up identity and the power of our stories with the following words: "You are your stories. You are the product of all the stories you have heard and lived—and of many that you have never heard. They have shaped how you see yourself, the world, and your place in it."[13]

The Problem of Stories

Whatever stories we embrace as ultimate stories, we are handing authority over to that story, or storyteller, to define, form and shape our identities. Sometimes it is a conscious decision but more often this kind of decision-making happens on a subconscious level. The problem begins with a rival authority telling a rival story which is given rival power to create a rival identity. A rival authority is anything or anyone challenging the authority of God and attempting to supplant his authority with another authority (a "rival" god). Furthermore, a rival story is any story contradicting or challenging God's ultimate kingdom story as revealed in the pages of scripture. As we will see, this is exactly what happened in Genesis 3 when Adam and Eve chose to reject God and embrace a rival authority telling a rival story. Because we know that stories have the power to form identities, it is easy to conclude that a rival story which originates from a rival authority will end up creating a rival identity. James Smith insightfully dubs these authorities as "(de)formative" in nature.[14] The Apostle Paul describes this process as being conformed by the rival power of the world (Romans 12:2). When this rival authority is given rival power, the end result is the formation of a rival identity that is less than what God intended for, and promised to, his people. Unfortunately, this is exactly what many Christian young adults

13. Jordan, *Reclaiming Your Story: Family History and Spiritual Growth*, 71.

14. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit,* 11.

are settling for in 21st century America. In fact, this is what many Christians regardless of age are settling for in 21st century America.

The mega-narrative of 21st century America is that identity is infinitely flexible and malleable and is ultimately based upon each individual's memories, desires, and self-created destinies.[15] The irony of this mega-narrative is it ultimately denies any one narrative as the prevailing narrative. Each story is merely one story among many others and each story is just as valid as another. The problem with this is it lends itself to the creation of the patchwork self of adolescence which leads to severe identity fragmentation as presented in the previous chapter. Young adults who embrace this mega-narrative end up stuck in adolescence with multiple identities (lower-case i) thrown together without any way of integrating them into a comprehensive Identity (capital I). Thus, their answer to the question "Who am I?" is a multiple-choice question with various "correct" answers (many identities) yet no way of uniting these identities into an integrated identity. Furthermore, many of these identities contradict and conflict with one another. Not surprisingly, their identity is just as fractured and inconsistent as the mega-narrative of the age.

The Solution of Stories

If the problem of stories is one of authority, it logically follows that the question is also one of authority: which story or stories will we give the power to define, shape and form our identities? For the Christian, the solution is simple: all rival authorities and their rival stories must be supplanted with the authority of God and his kingdom story.

15. Richard Lints, *Personal Identity in Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006), 161-162.

While it is true that Christians have multiple identities (national, ethnic, familial, educational, professional, political, relational and gender are some key examples), it is equally true that Christians have one identity that stands over and above all the other identities and it is under this identity that all other identities should be understood and ordered. Glanzer and Ream, in their article on Christian identity formation in higher education expand on this, linking the Christian's identity with the God's kingdom story in scripture: "…one can only properly understand oneself and these other identities in light of one's Christian identity and the Christian story that gives meaning to that identity."[16] Thus, it is in scripture that we find the ultimate answer to this dilemma of identity: a prevailing mega-narrative that gives God's people an integrated identity tying together any and all other identities. Although there are many stories within scripture, there is one story, a mega-narrative, which is first and foremost about God and his kingdom. It is this story which sheds significant light on human identity.

Waltke proposes there is a central story and theme in scripture that ties all the other stories and themes together and it is ultimately this story that provides the context for understanding the image of God and human identity. Waltke posits that two simple lines from the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-10 clearly encapsulate the central story of the Bible: "…hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come."[17] Waltke gives this central story the moniker "The Irruption of the Kingdom of God," further clarifying it is not the "eruption" of the kingdom (the breaking out from within) but rather the "irruption" of the kingdom (the breaking in from without) of his merciful kingship into his corrupted creation with the goal of redeeming its

16. Perry L. Glanzer and Todd C. Ream, "Whose Story? Which Identity? : Fostering Christian Identity at Christian Colleges and," *Christian Scholars Review Fall 2005*, October 01, 2005, 17, accessed November 25, 2018, http://proxy.gordonconwell.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=33h&AN=33h-DAE195DC-0FF4832C&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

17. Waltke and Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach*, 144.

captives into the realm of his blessed reign.[18] According to Waltke, it is the ultimate story of the irruption of the kingdom of God that ties all other stories of scripture together and it is this lens through which all other stories must be interpreted. This means that God's kingdom story is the story through which we must understand the image of God and human identity. This context sets the stage for the clarification of the image of God encountered in Genesis 1-2 and worked out in the rest of scripture.

Before we turn our focus to Genesis 1-2, it is important to note that these first two chapters of Genesis set the stage for all that is to follow in Genesis, the Pentateuch and ultimately the entirety of the canon.[19] Genesis 1-2 begins with a simple, yet profound phrase: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1). The simplicity of this initial Biblical phrase "belies the depth of its content. These seven Hebrew words are the foundation of all that is to follow in the Bible."[20] The phrase "In the beginning" is telling in and of itself for it "ties the work of God in the past to the work of God in the future" while also anticipating an ending to this story.[21] Genesis 1:1 alerts us to the fact that this is the beginning of God's kingdom story but it also implies there is an end to this divine story. Sailhamer writes, "The Pentateuch's 'beginning' already has an 'end' in view…God's activities are divided into a beginning and an end—that is, a 'last days.'"[22] Genesis, and the Pentateuch, are not the only

18. Waltke and Yu, *An Old Testament Theology*, 147.

19. Richard Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its Inversion* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 43.

20. John H. Sailhamer, Walter C. Kaiser, and Richard S. Hess, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman and David E. Garland, Revised ed., vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 50.

21. Sailhamer, Kaiser, and Hess, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 50.

22. John H. Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition, and Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 343.

evidence supporting this reality of one story. The Hebrew prophets and the writers of biblical apocalyptic literature wrote about God's kingdom in two distinct time frames: God's present kingdom in its incomplete form and God's triumphant kingdom in the age to come.[23] The story of the kingdom begun by the author of Genesis is wrapped up by the apostle John in the book of Revelation and the imago Dei, and thus human identity, sits within the context of this story.

God's kingdom story also defines human identity in terms of both mankind's origin and mankind's destiny within the context of that kingdom and in their relationship with the king.[24] It is this mega-narrative of scripture, that uncovers the identity-defining realties of God's people in the context of his coming kingdom.[25] Genesis 1 and 2 tell the story of the creation of human identity as the image of God appears on the scene, also giving the readers hints of human destiny. Genesis 3 through the end of the Hebrew Bible tell of the continual subversion of God's image and subsequent perversion of human identity as God's people reject their king and become makers of images resulting in an increasing distance between God and his people. These "memories," along with the memories of God's promise of more, must define our identity as God's people as they set the stage for the fulfillment of God's promised kingdom and the full realization of human identity in the New Testament. The New Testament continues God's story revealing the coming of his kingdom in a way never seen before in the subsequent re-creation and eventual realization of human identity as his image bearers through Jesus Christ, the perfect image of God.

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23. Waltke and Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach*, 158.

24. Lints, *Personal Identity in Theological Perspective*, 36.

25. Waltke and Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach*, 14.

The end result of this is the transformation Paul writes about in Romans 12:2. Merle Jordan stresses the importance of the story beyond stories: "…as the revealed truth of the Christian faith affirms, there is a story beyond a story, a God beyond the gods, and an ultimate reality beyond all perceptions of reality. Thus, for the fullest experience of psychological and spiritual well-being, you need to rewrite your story in relation to the ultimate truth of the revealed faith."[26] Jordan even goes so far as to claim this is part of the individuation process where we recognize and then reject the rival stories about God and ourselves in favor of the true story of the one true God.[27] In doing so, we can step into adulthood as we discover our real identity as God's much loved children who have been created and are being renewed in his perfect image.

While it may seem natural to jump right into a Biblical examination of the image of God understood within the context of the story of God's kingdom, it is necessary first to take a brief look at some of the common views of the image of God in evangelical theology.

Evangelical Theologies of The Image of God

Before we begin talking about what the imago Dei is, it is vital for us to address what the imago Dei is not. Over the two thousand years of the church, there have been a number of major views regarding the theological concept of the image of God. Millard Erickson does an admirable job of categorizing these various views into three major interpretations: the substantive interpretation, the relational interpretation, and the functional interpretation.[28] While there is truth in each of these interpretations of God's image, each of them are limited in that

26. Jordan, *Reclaiming Your Story: Family History and Spiritual Growth*, 71.

27. Jordan, *Reclaiming Your Story*, 89.

28. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 498-512.

they tend to focus on ways that humans are like God as opposed to God's intentions for human identity living under the rule of his kingdom.[29] This significantly diminishes the theological depth and beauty of the imago Dei by focusing on questions of human attributes as opposed to deeper questions of human meaning and human identity.

The Substantive Interpretation of the Image of God

The substantive interpretation identifies the image of God with some "definite characteristic or quality within the makeup of the human."[30] Historically, this is the favored interpretation of the imago Dei. This view assumes that the image of God entails a specific human attribute which distinguishes humanity from all other living animals.[31] The two attributes most often cited here are reason and righteousness. Gordon Clark is just one example of a theologian who holds to this view. He equates the image of God with reason writing, "the image must be reason because God is truth, and fellowship with him – a most important purpose in creation – requires thinking and understanding."[32] Kilner points out that "identifying people's reason with being in God's image has a long, illustrious history" going as far back as theologians such as Irenaeus, Origen and Athanasius.[33] Additionally, equating God's image with

29. John F. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub. Company, 2015), 204.

30. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 498.

31. Beth Felker Jones and Jeffrey W. Barbeau, eds., *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age: Explorations in Theological Anthropology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 69.

32. Gordon Haddon Clark, "The Image of God in Man," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 12, no. 4 (1969): 218, accessed November 25, 2018, http://proxy.gordonconwell.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0000694808&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

33. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*, 178.

righteousness has a distinguished history which has been promoted through the influence of Reformed theology.[34]

Erickson admirably highlights the flaws in linking God's image in humans with attributes such as righteousness and reason by drawing attention to the fact that the biblical text unquestionably fails to identify any qualities within man that might exclusively constitute the image of God.[35] Kilner goes so far as to point out that linking God's image with an intellectual or spiritual attribute is representative of a "spiritual-physical dichotomy" that is not only foreign to the Bible but reveals a more Platonic mode of thinking.[36] This dualistic approach to reading the Bible inadvertently dulls our understanding of the image of God and prevents us from understanding the big picture of the imago Dei. To parcel out pieces of God's image that then make up our likeness is to miss what the biblical text is saying about the king and his creation. As stated above, Kilner points out the biblical misunderstandings of those who hold to various forms of this interpretation, but he goes one step further in showing how this interpretation naturally leads to the marginalization of people who are judged to lack these qualities on some level. In this case, the theological truth of the image of God is often used to lessen the value of people who have been created in that very image. Kilner's evaluation of the substantive interpretation is short, powerful and sobering: "The door to devastation is open as soon as people begin to define being in God's image in terms of currently having attributes of God."[37]

34. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 189.

35. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 512,

36. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*, 186.

37. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 3.

The Relational Interpretation of the Image of God

The relational interpretation of the image of God has seen a rise in popularity the past few centuries. It has also seen a rise in popularity with the increase of postmodernism due, in part, to postmodernity's focus on the construction of meaning in the context of relationships. Neo-evangelical theologian Paul K. Jewett sums up this view with the following words: "To the question, how should one understand the human self in the light of biblical revelation, we are given the answer: the "I" is an "I" in relation to the "other," the divine Thou of the Creator and the human thou of the neighbor. This relationship is one of responsible love."[38] The first relationship cited as central to this interpretation is obvious: the relationship between God and his people. Those who hold to this view do not understand the imago Dei as something in humanity's nature, they understand the image of God as the experience of a relationship with God.[39] According to the relational interpretation, the imago Dei "is to be found first of all in the area of man's relation to God, his responsibility to God, and the possibility of fellowship with God."[40] Other theologians do not limit this relationship to the vertical dimension but also include the horizontal dimension of relationships. Seeing the link in scripture between the image of God and the male-female division of humanity, these theologians subsequently link the male-female relationship with the image of God. However, many of these theologians do not limit their understanding of the image to the male-female relationship and thus extend it to the male-male

38. Paul King. Jewett and Marguerite Shuster, *Who We Are: Our Dignity as Human: A Neo-evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 26.

39. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 502.

40. Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Carlisle, U.K.: Paternoster Press, 1994), 53.

relationship or female-female relationship.[41] For this interpretation, "standing in relationship with others is what constitutes the image."[42]

The problem with this interpretation is the reductionistic thinking which links God's image solely to relationships, because it diminishes people merely to something they do (i.e., relate).[43] Regarding this view, Kilner writes: "Actual relationships involving people then flow from, rather than constitute, what being in God's image is. They are one of the purposes for, and the fulfillments of, humanity's creation in God's image. In other words, people themselves, and not just their relationships, are in God's image."[44]

The Functional Interpretation of the Image of God

The functional interpretation of the image of God has also enjoyed a long history, experiencing a recent resurgence in popularity. According to this view, the image of God consists of something which man does, a function which man performs.[45] For the majority of the proponents of this interpretation, dominion over creation through royal representation is the function which constitutes the image of God in humanity. J. Richard Middleton has written an entire book equating the image with dominion titled "The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1."[46] Proof for this interpretation is found in the "side-by-side" occurrence of the words

41. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 50.

42. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 507.

43. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*, 214-215.

44. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 217.

45. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 508.

46. J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005).

"image" and "likeness" with the word "dominion" in Genesis 1:26.[47] This interpretation also points to the ancient near Eastern world and its connection between kings and images. Kilner writes "The basic idea is that people are 'kings' over creation—or at least 'vice-regents' whom God has put in charge."[48] Psalm 8:5-6 is often cited by those who hold to this view, noting the close connection between the image of God in humanity and humanity's role of ruling over creation.[49] In response to this view, Kilner points out the lack of any mention or inference of dominion or rulership in the image of God passages found in Genesis 5:3, Genesis 9:6, Colossians 3:10, Ephesians 4:24, Romans 8:29 and 2 Corinthians 3:18.[50] Furthermore, Erickson points out the weakness of using Psalm 8 as evidence for the functional interpretation in that the words "image" and "likeness" are never used by the psalmist.[51] Most importantly, there is no clear equating of the image of God with the exercise of dominion in Genesis 1. Blomberg's evaluation of this interpretation as one of cause and effect is germane here: "…it is *because* humans are endowed with God's image that they are prepared to act as his vice-regents, stewarding creation. For this reason, the image cannot be equated with our role as stewards; it must be what makes us uniquely qualified to exercise that role."[52] Therefore, representation is linked to the image of God but is not the essence of the image of God.

47. Middleton, *The Liberating Image,* 50-60.

48. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*, 200.

49. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 509.

50. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*, 202-203.

51. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 512.

52. Jones and Barbeau, *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age: Explorations in Theological Anthropology*, 73.

Conclusion on The Evangelical Theologies of The Image of God

It is evident that each of these three views falls short on one level or another by reducing the image of God to an attribute, a relationship or a function. While not entirely false, none of these views considers the full theological reality of the image of God as understood within the context of the mega-narrative of God's kingdom. The image of God is not just about human attributes, relationships or functions; it is so much more.

The Image of God: God's Intentions for Human Identity

It is not beneficial simply to point out the inadequate nature of theological views of the image of God because it concludes with an understanding of what the image of God is not and fails to comprehend what the image of God actually is. While it is impossible to understand all that the imago Dei is, it is possible to understand some key truths about it.

Some of the confusion regarding the meaning of the imago Dei is due to the paucity of explicit references in scripture. Gardoski writes, "It is axiomatic in theological studies that the less information in scripture on a given subject, the more numerous and varied are the theories put forth to explain it. This is true concerning the imago Dei—the image of God in man."[53] Middleton notes the brevity of references to the image of God pointing out that there are just three explicit references to the image in the Old Testament: Genesis 1:26 to 27; 5:1, and 9:6.[54] Of the New Testament passages he writes, "…the idea that humans are made in God's image does

53. Kenneth M. Gardoski, "The Imago Dei Revisited," *The Journal of Ministry of Ministry and Theology*, Fall 2007, 7, accessed November 24, 2018, http://www.galaxie.com/article/jmat11-2-01.

54. J. Richard Middleton, "The Liberating Image? Interpreting the Imago Dei in Context," Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, January 2000, 8, accessed February 25, 2018, https://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted_hildebrandt/otesources/01-genesis/text/articles-books/middleton-imagodei-csr.pdf.

not surface again until the New Testament. Even here, however, only two texts speak of creation in God's image (1 Corinthians 11:7 and James 3:9). The rest either exalt Christ as the paradigm of the image of God or address the salvific renewal of the image in the church."[55] Like Gardoski, Middleton emphasizes the scarcity of references which has led to a wide variety of opinions as to the meaning and definition of the image of God.

Regardless of the scarcity of biblical references and the various opinions on the definition of the image of God, it is possible to understand more about the image of God by looking at the whole canon of scripture. As we step back and take a big picture look at the image of God in all of the Bible, we learn that, first and foremost, the image of God is about God's intentions for humanity.[56] In Genesis 1, God creates Adam and Eve "in his own image" and then commands them to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion…" over it (Genesis 1:27-28). In the paradisiacal setting of the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve exist in an unhindered relationship with God, we catch a glimpse, on some level, of human identity as God intended. As representative heads of humanity, Adam and Eve exist in an identity-defining connection to the God of Israel which results in a purpose-determining reflection of God throughout the entire earth. However, it becomes clear in Genesis 3 and following, there is more to be understood about human identity and the image of God as Adam and Eve attempt to thwart God's intentions by rejecting their God-given identity, thus subverting the image of God. This leads to a perversion of human identity that is passed on from one generation to another and evidences itself repeatedly in Israel's creation of "gods" in their own image to which they connect in an identity-deforming way. This corrupts their God-intended identity and, as a result,

55. Middleton, "The Liberating Image? Interpreting the Imago Dei in Context."

56. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*, 131.

their God-intended purpose as they become reflections of these images of idols instead of the original they were intended to reflect. However, despite the growing distance between God and his people in the first testament, God's intensions will not be thwarted. When Jesus appears on the scene, God's intentions for human identity become crystal clear. Ultimately, the image of God is Jesus Christ, the first true human being in human history.[57] Jesus is the perfect "image of the invisible God" that God intended humanity to be from the beginning of creation as Jesus accomplishes what both Adam and Israel failed to accomplish (Colossians 1:15). Not only is Jesus the standard for human identity as the image of God, he is also the one who renews human identity through re-creation in the image of God. Through union with Jesus, men and women can enter into an ever-deepening, identity-defining connection to God, resulting in an ever-increasing purpose-determining reflection of God. Thus, it is in and through the perfect image of God that humans can both comprehend the image of God they were intended to be and become the image of God they were originally created to be.[58] However, the complete realization of God's intentions for human identity as the image of God awaits Jesus' return when "we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

The Image of God: Connection and Reflection

W. Sibley Towner sums up the image of God with the words "In short, the Genesis assessment that we human beings are made in the image of God and that from a right relationship with God flows nurturing 'dominion' in the world that launches us aright…We are

57. Jones and Barbeau, *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age: Explorations in Theological Anthropology*, 240.

58. Smith*, You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit,* 87.

God's creatures and chosen partners in the work of creation."[59] John Kilner builds on this concisely summarizing the image of God with two words: connection and reflection. According to Kilner, "Creation in God's image entails a special connection with God and an intended reflection of God. Renewal in God's image entails a more intimate connection with God through Christ and an increasingly actual reflection of God in Christ, to God's glory."[60] Ultimately, creation in God's image is an identity-defining connection to God resulting in a purpose-determining reflection of God. Renewal in God's image entails an ever—deepening identity-defining connection to God and an ever—increasing purpose-determining reflection of God. The image of God entails both human identity (our connection with God) and human purpose (our reflection of God). This study traces these two themes of the imago Dei, connection and reflection, through three significant movements of God's story: creation, fall, and redemption. At the completion of this study we will agree with Towner who points out that although the phrase "image of God" infrequently makes an appearance in the Biblical canon, "much of scripture can be viewed through the lens of the imago Dei" because "All biblical anthropology turns out to be theological anthropology, which means that a human being is defined by his or her relationship with God..."[61] However, it is important to keep in mind that the image of God is not first and foremost about our connection to God or our reflection of God, the image of God is ultimately about God's intentions for humanity.

The next section of this chapter looks in detail at the story that must supplant any and all rival stories if we are to grow into the individuated, mature, Christ-following adults God intends

59. W. Sibley Towner, "Clones of God," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 59, no. 4 (October 2005): 356, doi:10.1177/002096430505900402.

60. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*, xi.

61. Towner, "Clones of God," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 59, no. 4.

us to be. Since the imago Dei is foundational to human identity and human identity formation, this is accomplished by a detailed analysis of the theological construct of the image of God as understood within the context of the story of God where the thesis of this chapter, that the image of God is an identity-defining connection with God resulting in a purpose-determining reflection of God, will be unpacked.

Act 1: Created in The Image of God: Creation of Human Identity

Image and Identity—An Identity-Defining Connection to God

First and foremost, the image of God is an identity-defining connection with God. It is not an accident that what humans connect to as ultimate becomes the primary determinant of human identity. Genesis 1-2 reveals that this was God's plan from the beginning of creation; it was Adam and Eve's intimate connection with God that was to dictate their identity. Adam and Eve's primal connection with God can be better understood through three themes: telos, covenant and dependence.

Telos

Genesis 1 paints a beautiful and poetic picture of the divine king creating the universe in splendor and glory. The author reveals the God of Israel as the creator of everything. He creates matter out of nothing, including objects normally worshiped by people in the ancient near Eastern world, like the sun, moon, and stars. The author of Genesis leaves no room for questions in the reader's mind as to who the king and creator of the world is.

The author also paints an absolutely stunning picture of the Garden of Eden. As God subdues creation, bringing chaos into beauty, a garden described much like Israel's tabernacle and temple appears. Sailhamer points out that in the Hebrew Bible, the word Eden most often

means delight. Therefore, "We may assume the name was intended to evoke a picture of idyllic delight and rest."[62] Waltke expands on Sailhamer's definition of Eden defining the Hebrew word as "luxuriance," "paradise," "utopia," "peace and wholeness," "blessing and well-being," and "a land of bliss."[63] The garden is true life. It is paradise. It is the life-giving presence of the living God and it is where humans were created to belong and live out their God-given identities as the imago Dei. The garden of Eden is everything humans could ever hope for or want. It is the biblical vision of shalom: a place defined by peace, contentment, fulfillment, significance, security, and rest. This garden is humanity's home, the place where they belong. James Smith calls this place humanity's telos, the end for which they were created.[64] The God of the garden is the telos of human beings.

In theory, the word "telos" may be a foreign word to many 21st century American Christians but it is not foreign in practice. Telos, simply put, is what is worshiped as ultimate; it is what one looks to for significance, security, and fulfillment. It is what a human loves as ultimate. According to Smith, humans are creatures who live life leaning forward, bent on arriving at the place they long for and love.[65] This leaning is our telos. It is what we want and crave, the ultimate vision of the good life we desire. Humans, as the imago Deo, were created to crave and desire God and his kingdom. Telos as ultimate human worship and love for God is articulated poignantly in the words of Psalm 42:1-2: "As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come

62. John Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound: A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account* (Colorado Springs, CO: Dawson Media, 2011), 76.

63. Waltke and Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach*, 248, 250, 255, 356.

64. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, 11.

65. Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 11.

and appear before God?" This is the kind of gut-level love and desire which defines human telos. The creation narrative of Genesis 1-2 emphatically supports the truth that God has created human beings for himself and the human heart is designed to long for him and to find its end, and its identity, through an intimate, teleological connection to him.

It is not the physical, geographical location of the garden which makes it so special, it is the presence of the one who dwells there. It is no accident that the Garden of Eden is described in similar fashion to Israel's tabernacle, Israel's temple, and the eschatological temple revealed in the book of Revelation. The lush and stunning imagery of Eden, much like the lush and stunning imagery of the tabernacle and temple, including the beautiful trees (2:9), the life-giving rivers (2:10-14) and the brilliantly reflective precious gems (2:12), all point to the abundantly rich life that comes from living in God's presence. The Garden of Eden, like the tabernacle, temple and eschatological temple, is the dwelling place of Yahweh, the Lord and King of Israel. It is the place where God tabernacles, or dwells, with his image. In this garden, God reveals himself to his image, he blesses his image, and he communicates with his image. In this garden, the image of God instinctively knows that true life is found solely in walking with God.[66] Adam and Eve know intimately that fulfillment, significance, peace, security, and purpose come only from their creator and king and the response of his image is to worship him and him alone.

This is supported by Genesis 2:15 which tells us that the imago Dei is "put" in the garden to "work" and keep" it. Sailhamer points out that the word "put" in this verse is different from the more common word for "put" in verse 8 and is reserved for two special usages: the rest and safety which God gives to his people in the land (Genesis 19:16; Deuteronomy 3:20; 12:10; 25:19) and the dedication of something in the Lord's presence (Exodus 16:33; Leviticus 16:22;

66. Sailhamer, Kaiser, and Hess, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, 109.

Numbers 17:4). Sailhamer posits that both senses of the word “put” apply here: the image of God is “’put’ into the garden, where he can ‘rest’ and be ‘safe,’ and man is ‘put’ in the garden ‘in God’s presence,’ where he can have fellowship with God.”[67] Furthermore, the words “work” and “keep” in Genesis 2:15 are often used as priestly terms. “Put" is used of the installation of priests in their role at the tabernacle as those dedicated in the Lord’s presence (see above). In the priestly context of this passage, “work" and “keep are better translated “worship" and “obey."[68] Therefore, the image of God is created and placed in the garden in an identity-defining relationship to God to worship and obey God thus finding his telos in God and God alone.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism sums all of this up in the first question and answer: “What is the chief end of man?” The answer is both simple and profound: “Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”[69] Augustine unknowingly yet beautifully summarizes this question and answer in his “Confessions” with these words: “You stir man to take pleasure in praising you, because you have made us for yourself and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”[70] These anthropological realities flow out of the truths expressed in the creation narrative of Genesis 1 and 2: we were created in the image of God, by God and for God, and we cannot embrace our true identity as the image of God until we find our telos in an identity-defining connection to God.

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67. Sailhamer, Kaiser, and Hess, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 79.

68. Sailhamer, Kaiser, and Hess, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 79.

69. G. I. Williamson, *The Westminster Shorter Catechism: For Study Classes* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 2003), 1.

70. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), book 1, paragraph 1, Kindle.

The telos of humanity determines the identity of humanity. What we ultimately live for determines who we are. In other words, who I am is defined by what I desire.[71] GK Beale writes, “What people revere, they resemble, either for ruin or restoration."[72] James Smith takes it one step further proposing that the word “worship" and the word" love" are synonymous and interchangeable terms. He writes, “You are what you love."[73] As bearers of the image of God, humans were created to love and worship God as ultimate and then, as we will see, increasingly become like him. The image of God is God’s intentions for humanity and is an identity-defining connection with God resulting in a purpose-determining reflection of God. We were created by him and for him and our true identity is found only in an identity-defining teleological connection.

All of this supports the point that men and women, who were created in the image of God, were placed in the garden for worship of the God of Israel. He is at the center of the worship in Eden, just as he is at the center of the worship in the tabernacle, in the temple, and just as he will be at the center of worship in the eschatological temple. He is the telos, the end for which men and women have been created. Therefore, a central part of humanity’s identity as the image of God is that of worship: an orienting of our lives in which we realize that only the presence of God offers us the good life for which we long.

Covenant

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71. Jones and Barbeau, *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age: Explorations in Theological Anthropology*, 101.

72. Gregory K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic), 16.

73. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, 7.

As we have seen, the image of God is an identity-defining teleological connection to God. The image of God is also an identity-defining connection to God which is covenantal. For us to properly understand this covenant connection, it is vital to understand Genesis 1-2 in the covenantal context in which it sits.

Contrary to popular belief and teaching, Genesis 1-2 is not just a story of beginnings; it is the framework in which all other stories of scripture must be understood. Genesis 1-2 sits in the greater context of the Pentateuch, and the Old Testament, which was originally composed and compiled for the nation of Israel, God's covenant people, and it sets the stage for all that is to come in scripture. It is within these books that God's covenant community finds their roots and ultimately their identity as the imago Dei.[74] Specifically, the image language in Genesis 1-9 sits in the larger covenantal argument about Israel's relationship to God.[75] It is in a covenant relationship with God that humans find and live out their identity as the image of God. This is because biblical covenants, like the image of God, have to do with questions of ownership and belonging (i.e., to whom do people belong to and to whom do they confess ownership).[76] As will be seen, this is evident in Israel's paradigmatic act of idolatry when they break covenant with God and worship the golden calf, rejecting God's ownership of them and thus rejecting their identity as the image of God. If we want to live out our identity as the image of God and be fully human, we must exist in a covenant relationship "to the One who made us and for whom we were made."[77]

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74. Waltke and Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach*, 14.

75. Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its Inversion*, 3.

76. Lints, *Identity and Idolatry*, 36.

77. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, 8.

The term "image of God" is a relational term in that it defines humans directly and intimately in relationship to God. In fact, first and foremost, the image of God is a relational term and it implies that Adam and Eve, along with humans in general, were created for a relationship with God and that relationship with God is what secures human identity.[78] This intimate relationship of humankind with God in Genesis 1-2 is also evident in God's continual provision of all that is good for his image: his intimate creation of his image (including breathing the breath of life into his nostrils in Genesis 2:7), his provision of good food (Genesis 2:16-17), his command to his image (Genesis 2:17), and his good gift of the woman as a his helper (Genesis 2:22). In fact, this relationship with God is so good and so intimate that God's images "were both naked and were not ashamed" which paints the picture of a rich, intimate, and unhindered relationship with God and each other, not yet damaged by sin and disobedience.

There is a parallel of Adam and Eve and the nation of Israel which reinforces the reality of this covenantal connection to God. Just like Israel, Adam and Eve were issued a command, or a law, by God. Just like Israel, God promised blessing to Adam and Eve for obedience to his law and he promised curses for their disobedience. All of these qualifications assume a covenant with God and this connection is an identity-defining covenant connection.

The image of God as an identity-defining connection to God that is covenantal in nature is also evident in all of the descriptions of the Garden of Eden. As previously stated, there are strong parallels between the literary descriptions of Eden, the tabernacle, the temple and the eschatological temple. This is not by accident as the garden is a temple, a primordial meeting

78. Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its Inversion*, 153.

place between God and his image where humans enjoy the presence and fellowship of God in a covenant relationship with him.[79] Kline writes,

> …Eden had the character of a holy tabernacle, a microcosmic house of God. And since it was God himself who, present in his theophanic Glory, constituted the Edenic temple, man in the Garden of God could quite literally confess that Yahweh was his refuge and the Most High was his habitation.[80]

A few examples of the parallelism between Eden, the tabernacle and the temples include a river flowing out of Eden (Genesis 2:10) and a river flowing from the throne of God in the eschatological temple (Revelation 22:1-3), the presence of the tree of life in both Eden (Genesis 2:9), and in the eschatological temple (Revelation 22:1-3), and the presence of precious stones such as gold and onyx in Eden (Genesis 2:11-12), in the tabernacle (Exodus 25:7, 11), in the temple (2 Chronicles 3:8-9) and in the eschatological temple (Revelation 21:18-21). Lastly there are the cherubim the Lord places in the garden to guard the way to the tree of life after He exiles Adam and Eve from his presence in Genesis 3:24. It is by no means a coincidence that there are two solid gold cherubim on the two ends of the mercy seat, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings in the tabernacle. That mercy seat sits on top of the ark in which the covenantal ten words to Israel were housed (Exodus 25:20-21). These ten words were foundational to God's covenant connection with Israel. God's words in Exodus 25:22 reveal the significance of the ark and the cherubim: "There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel." Just like the tabernacle, Eden is the dwelling

79. Sailhamer, Kaiser, and Hess, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, 80.

80. Meredith G. Kline, "Investiture with the Image of God," Meredith G. Kline Resource Site, 2012, 2, accessed November 25, 2018, https://meredithkline.com/klines-works/articles-and-essays/investiture-with-the-image-of-god/.

place of God where He intimately connects with his image and issues a covenant commandment for his image to obey, promising blessings if they obey and curses for their disobedience. This covenant relationship is an identity-defining connection for God's image in both Genesis 1 and Exodus 25.

The contrast between the different titles used for God in Genesis 1-2 are further evidence for the image of God as an identity-defining, covenant connection with God. Throughout Genesis 1:1-2:3, the Hebrew word used for God is "Elohim," a more general title for God (Genesis 1:1-12, 14, 16-18, 20-22, 24-29, 31 and 2:2-3). This title is used for God as the transcendent one who is the subject of all divine activity revealed to man and as the deserved object of all worship and fear from humanity.[81] Zanhiser points out that Genesis 1 and its use of "Elohim" as a title for God highlights the first of two versions of the creation story in Genesis of which the emphasis is on God as the ultimate creator. Genesis 1 contains an account of the creation of the world from the viewpoint of God as ultimate: the sovereign God with infinite power and a great voice.[82] This makes sense since Genesis 1 is a more general overview of God's creation of the universe, giving us a big picture look at creation. However, in Genesis 2, there is a change in the name for God which includes the title "Yahweh." (Genesis 2:4-5, 7-9, 15-16, 18-19, 21-22). This change in the name for God begins immediately following the first of the seven "These are the generations" statements around which the book of Genesis is structured. This section not only introduces a change in perspective on the creation account described in Genesis 1:1-2:3, it also introduces a change in perspective on the God of the creation account in

81. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 44.

82. A.H. Mathias Zahniser, *Symbol and Ceremony: Making Disciples across Cultures*(Monrovia, CA: Marc, 1997), 33-34.

Genesis 1:1-2:3 as he relates to his image. While Genesis 1:1-2:3 uses only the Hebrew title "Elohim" for God, the author switches to utilize the Hebrew title "Yahweh" in Genesis 2:4 thus highlighting the imago Dei's special relationship with God. The name Yahweh is the personal covenant name of God expressing "his nearness, his concern for man, and the revelation of his redemptive covenant."[83] It is the proper name of God reflecting his covenant commitment, or intimate connection, with his image-bearers.[84] The author of Genesis continues on to use this covenant title for God as he intimately forms his image from the dust of the ground and breathes into his nostrils the breath of life (Genesis 2:7). This name for God is used as he puts his image in the garden to worship and obey Him (Genesis 2:15). This covenant name for God is used one verse later as God is now issuing his covenant stipulations to his image, telling him about all the trees he can eat from yet also commanding him to steer clear of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16-17). This personal name is used yet again when God, in his goodness, creates a "helper" fit for Adam so that he does not have to be alone (Genesis 2:18). The intimate, identity-defining connection of the imago Dei to God as it pertains to his name is magnified even more so in Eve and the snake's non-usage of the title "Yahweh" in Genesis 3:1 and 3:3. In these specific situations, they refuse to acknowledge the identity-defining covenant connection to God and thus are rejecting God's primordial covenant and therefore rejecting the God-given identity that is the imago Dei. This is the second of the two versions of the creation story. In the first, God is the ultimate creator. In the second version, God is the intimate companion establishing a covenant with his images.[85]

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83. Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, 212.

84. Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 120.

85. Zahniser, *Symbol and Ceremony: Making Disciples across Cultures*, 33-34.

Bernard Och in his paper "Creation and Redemption: Towards a Theology of Creation," supports this link between the image of God and biblical covenants, positing that the imago Dei and covenants are essentially synonymous. He writes:

> "Covenant is the historical counterpart to the creational Imago Dei. They are parallel realities expressing the nearness of God and the unique relationship to God which is humanity's preordained destiny. The covenant is only possible within the framework of creation and serves a creational goal, the ultimate reconciliation of God and humanity. Just as the Creator committed Himself to humankind through the original creation, so He recommits Himself through the covenant to certain individuals and a specific people."[86]

Dependence

The image of God is an identity-defining connection with God that is both teleological and covenantal. It is also an identity-defining connection that is dependent. The language of "image" and "likeness" in Genesis 1:26 argues emphatically for dependence on an original. In the Hebrew language, "image" is the word *tselem* and is used 16 times in the Hebrew Bible.[87] The majority of the time it is used to indicate an "idol" referring to an image as a representation of a deity. The significance of the relationship of an idol to the image of God will be evident shortly. Five times *tselem* is used to describe humanity as created in the image of God.[88] A *tselem*, or idol, served as a representative, or an image, of an original and it was said to be a dependent refection of the original. In the ancient near Eastern world, kings were understood to be images of the gods they served. The king was a human representative and reflection placed in a position of authority to represent and reflect a specific god, dependently ruling on that god's behalf. In turn, the human king would then place a statue in his temple which served as his image

86. Bernard Och, "Creation and Redemption: Towards a Theology of Creation," *Judaism* 44, no. 2 (1995): 231, accessed November 26, 2018.

87. Towner, "Clones of God," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 59, no. 4.

88. Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, 767.

or idol and ultimately reflected and represented his kingship and kingdom. In both cases, the image reflected the original and had no meaning outside of the original. Middleton's succinct definition of image is germane here: "the semantic range of *tselem*… typically includes "idol," which in the common theology of the ancient Near East is precisely a localized, visible, corporal real representation of the divine."[89]

The Hebrew word *demut* is most often translated "likeness" and is used 26 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. Nearly half of its usages are in Ezekiel where Ezekiel uses it to avoid communicating that he saw God and instead wrote that he saw the "likeness of God." This kind of usage implies a reflection or some sort of visual similarity.[90] Isaiah 13:4 builds on this showing that the word can be used to indicate similarities in the sense of being a pattern or a model.[91] This word is also used in Genesis 5:3 where Adam creates his son Seth in his "in his own likeness." All of these usages highlight the dependent nature of humanity created in the "image" and "likeness" of God. Therefore, the word "demuth" essentially echoes the meaning of "tselem." It is vital to note that there are only two passages where these two words appear side by side: in Genesis 1:26 and 5:1. Many attempts have been made to distinguish between the definitions of these two words. Some propose that "likeness" limits the meaning of the word "image."[92] Others propose that the two terms distinguish between the natural and the supernatural qualities of God in the human being.[93] Still others distinguish between the two

89. J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image? Interpreting the Imago Dei in Context*.

90. Towner, "Clones of God," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 59, no. 4.

91. Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, 192.

92. Waltke and Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach*, 219.

93. Towner, "Clones of God," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 59, no. 4.

proposing that the image is the stable foundation in human nature, providing the potential for growth and likeness to God.[94] These are just a few examples of the many theories out there. However, attempting to differentiate definitions of two phrases used in a parallel manner such as this overlooks the reality of Biblical Hebrew, and specifically Hebrew poetry. The biblical author is utilizing synonymous parallelism with the two words “image” and “likeness” in Genesis 1:26 and Genesis 5:1. Feinberg writes, "the two Hebrew terms are not referring to two different entities. In short, use reveals the words are used interchangeably."[95] Thus, both words communicate the same exact truth: that human beings are mere images, or idols, dependent on God for their identities. The “image” and “likeness” of God are terms expressing the dependent nature of human identity as idols of God. The fact that men and women were created in the image of God affirms that human identity is dependent in nature and is found not within itself but within the object they image. Human identity is dependent on another, an original, and the only way humans can find true their true identity is in a dependent, identity-defining connection in which they image that original.

The image of God as an identity-defining dependent connection is also evident in the relationship between God and his image witnessed in their communication. The imago Dei is fully dependent on God for truth and guidance as seen in the directives God gives the man and woman. After blessing them, God commands them to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it...” in Genesis 1:28. This command illustrates the dependence of God’s image upon God. Furthermore, in Genesis 2:16-17, God reveals his image’s dependence on him for the

94. Verna E. Harrison, *God's Many-Splendored Image: Theological Anthropology for Christian Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 7.

95. Charles Lee Feinberg, "Image of God," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 129.

knowledge of right and wrong when he commands Adam, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Genesis 2:16-17). The image of God is a life of faith, trust, and obedience in this ultimate knowledge of right and wrong, good and bad. It is when the image of God chooses independence from God that he rejects his identity as the image of God. As we will see, while God's image might declare independence from him, there is no such thing as human independence when it comes to identity. Human identity is dependent on someone or something and God designed humans to be fully dependent on him.

Image and Purpose: A Purpose-Determining Reflection of God

It should be clear now that the image of God is an identity-defining connection with God which determines and defines human identity. Human identity is first and foremost about humanity's creation in the image of God. This identity-defining definition describes the image of God as a noun. However, this is only half of the definition of the imago Dei. The second half of the definition addresses the image of God as a verb. If the image of God as a noun is our God-given identity as humans, the image of God as a verb is our God-given purpose, or calling, as humans. The image of God as a verb is the resulting purpose-determining reflection of God that flows out of the identity-defining connection to him.

In the image of God literature, there is much discussion as to what defines the image of God and what is a consequence of the image of God.[96] There seems to be a desire to understand what ultimately defines the image of God and what is a consequence of being created in the image of God. For instance, Gardoski proposes that man's reflection, or dominion, is a

96. Kenneth M. Gardoski, "The Imago Dei Revisited," *The Journal of Ministry of Ministry and Theology*, Fall 2007, 14, accessed November 24, 2018, http://www.galaxie.com/article/jmat11-2-01.

consequence of the image of God and thus it does not define the imago Dei.[97] Middleton, on the other hand, equates the image of God with the reflection of God as expressed in humanity's God-given rule over creation.[98] In Middelton's definition of the image of God, there is little emphasis on the connection of humanity to God. In these attempts to understand the imago Dei, the views fail to consider the whole canon of scripture and the theological relationship between the image of God and idolatry as the subversion of the image of God. This will be looked at in detail in the next section. Furthermore, in the western world, there seems to be no problem separating human identity from human purpose. Identity and purpose can even be at odds with one another. This means that regardless of your life's purpose, you can call yourselves, or identify with, whatever you desire. However, this separation between identity and purpose is not biblical. In the creation account, identity and purpose go hand-in-hand. In fact, there is a dynamic association between the two as purpose flows out of identity. Biblically speaking, humanity's purpose-determining reflection of God is a result of their identity-defining connection with God. Essentially, connection leads to purpose. If we want to be even more biblical in our language, connection leads to reflection; humans will reflect that to which they are most closely connected. It is our connection to God that directly results in our reflection of God. Towner rightly proposes that the Hebrew grammar of Genesis 1:26 syntactically supports this reality. He points out that the conjunction between the phrases "let us make man in our own image, after our likeness" and "and let them have dominion…" is not the simple coordinating conjunction "and," but rather the subordinating conjunction, "so that."[99] Towner concludes that the result is "a purpose clause that

97. Gardoski, "The Imago Dei Revisited," 14.

98. Middleton, "The Liberating Image? Interpreting the Imago Dei in Context," 12.

99. Towner, "Clones of God," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 59, no. 4.

could be translated: 'let us make *adam* in our image, according to our likeness, so they may have dominion…'"[100] Therefore, this dominion is part of the image's reflection of God and is a direct result of an intimate connection to God as creatures made in his image. The image's purpose of reflecting God flows directly out of the intimate connection to him and is part and parcel of the definition of the image of God.

GK Beale supports this in his exposition of Genesis 1:27 – 28. Beale points out that Genesis 1:28 contains the communication of God's purpose, or commission, to his image: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion…". While the details of this verse will be addressed shortly, here the five verbs describing the commission God gives to his image are highlighted: be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue it and have dominion. Beale further points out that Genesis 1:27 contains the means by which humans accomplish this purpose: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." We accomplish our God-given purpose by means of our creation in God's image and our close connection to God.[101] Our purpose/calling is the overflow of our identity and both together define what it means to be in the imago Dei.

This section will take a closer look at this resulting purpose-determining reflection of God. This purpose-determining reflection of God can be better understood through three themes: representation, refraction, and glory.

Representation

100. Towner, "Clones of God."

101. G. K. Beale and Mitchell Kim, *God Dwells among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth* (Nottingham: IVP, 2015), 29-30.

There are two metaphors used in Genesis 1 and 2 to expand on the image of God's representation of God. The first one occurs in Genesis 1 and is that of a vice-regent. The second one occurs in Genesis 2 and is that of a priest.

The concept of dominion in Genesis 1:26 and then later in Genesis 1:28 highlights the metaphor of the image of God as a vice-regent establishing God's rule on the earth. As we have seen, in the ancient near Eastern world, a king would establish an idol, or idols, to represent him and his authority. These were images representing the presence and rule of the king. The image represented the original in a way so clearly connected to it, that honoring the image was honoring the original.[102] An unequivocal biblical example of this occurs in Daniel 3 when Nebuchadnezzar sets up an image to himself that the people then had to bow down to in worship when they heard the sound of musical instruments. In this account, bowing down to the golden image was the same as bowing down and worshiping the king himself. There are multiple examples of this in the ancient near Eastern world.[103] In each example, the image had the authority of the king. In the exact same manner, the image of God has the authority of God to subdue and rule over the earth on behalf of God. What makes the image of God astonishingly different from ancient near Eastern images of kings is the fact that every man and women is created to be a living, breathing image concretely representing the king, his kingship and his kingdom.

The second representation metaphor of priest is seen in Genesis 2:15: "the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it." As previously stated, the

102. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*, 55.

103. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 55.

Hebrew word for "put" is reserved for two different purposes in scripture.[104] One manner of usage is to dedicate something in Yahweh's presence. Most often in the Pentateuch, this is used for the dedication of priests in their priestly work.[105] As stated previously, the words "work" and "keep" are also priestly terms that are best translated as worship and obey. In light of this, God's placement of his image in the garden strongly resembles his later establishment of the priesthood in the tabernacle and the temple.[106] Lints sums it up best when he says that God's image represents God by mediating the sovereign presence of God within the central nave of the cosmic temple.[107] Simply put, the image of God as priests of God were to represent God and mediate his presence to the people around them. This was the image's purpose-determining reflection of God which flowed out of their identity-defining connection to God.

This representative image of God is not something just seen in Genesis 1 and 2. In Exodus 19:5-6 God recommissions Israel as his image with the same commission he gave his image in Genesis 1:28: "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." This divine commissioning and its corresponding responsibility was a reiteration of God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3 of blessing and being a blessing.[108] God's promise to Abraham of being a blessing and having descendants as numerous as the stars in heaven in Genesis 12:2-3 and Genesis 15:5 is the same responsibility and privilege that God issues to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28. All of these texts

104. Sailhamer, Kaiser, and Hess, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, 79.

105. Exodus 16:33-34, Leviticus 16:23, Numbers 17:4, Deuteronomy 26:4, 10.

106. Sailhamer, Kaiser, and Hess, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, 77.

107. Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its* Inversion, 70.

108. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2, 423.

are connected and the common link is the image of God's commission to represent God as his priests. God is recommissioning his image to be his representative with both Abraham and the nation of Israel, just as he commissioned Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28. Notice that Exodus 19:5-6 ends with God reminding his people of their calling as the image of God by referring to them as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. They are God's priestly representatives, like Abraham was and like Adam and Eve were intended to be. Just as Adam and Eve's identity as the image of God was dependent on the obedience of faith to God's words, so was Abraham's, as was Israel's. The nation of Israel, just like Adam and Eve, was created in the image of God and called to mediate God's presence to the nations in the role of representative priests. This was their purpose-determining reflection of God. This representative purpose of humanity as the image of God reveals a God who is not afraid to share his power but rather delights in inviting his image into partnership with him as his representative priests and vice-regents.[109] This sheds even more light on the intimate nature of the connection between God and his image. God not only calls his image into an intimate relationship with himself, he then puts humanity on display as his idols, representing him as his priests and vice-regents to all of creation.

There is no clear delineation between the practical ramifications of the image of God as a vice-regent and the image of God as a priest. The two metaphors are utilized to describe one main reality of the image of God: the presence of the image of God was called to usher in the presence of the Almighty God wherever the image goes.[110] The practical ramifications of this representative purpose are wrapped up in the commands and the metaphors themselves. These tasks include representing God's presence, guarding and protecting God's dwelling place, being

109. Towner, "Clones of God," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 59, no. 4.

110. Beale and Kim, *God Dwells among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth*, 30.

obedient to God's spoken word, expanding God's dwelling place, exercising dominion, and subduing the earth in relationship with God as a vice-regent. Simply put, the image of God finds its purpose in representing God and his presence to the world.

Refraction

The first aspect of the imago Dei's purpose-determining reflection is representation. The second aspect is refraction. Lints points out that this refraction of God is a double refraction. First, the image is called to reflect God. Next the image is to called to illuminate creation with that reflection.[111]

Reflecting God is about reflecting who God is and what God does.[112] When people look at humanity, they should be able to see what God is like. Ultimately, this reflection is about orientation; having a model or pattern to develop into.[113] Adam and Seth in Genesis 5 are a perfect example of this. Genesis 5:3 tells us that when Adam had a son that son was "in his own likeness" and "after his image." Seth, who is the son of Adam, is in Adam's image and Adam's likeness. Kilner summarizes this passage by writing that Seth "had a special connection to his father, such that he normally over time would reflect many of the attributes of his father."[114] Adam was the model according to which Seth would develop and reflect just as God is the model according to which human beings would develop and reflect. Therefore, just as God subdued, ruled, and had dominion over the chaos of creation, his image was to reflect the same activities by fulfilling God's commission to subdue, rule, and have dominion over creation while

111. Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its* Inversion, 63.

112. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*, 60.

113. Gardoski, "The Imago Dei Revisited," 11.

114. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*, 131.

expanding the rule of God through multiplication and reflection. Another example of this reflection is the sabbath rest of God. God calls his people to rest from their work on the seventh day. Genesis 1 tells us that God rested from his work on the seventh day. God's command to his image to rest on the seventh day is a call to reflect who he is and what he does. He is calling humanity to image his example. This command is the imago Dei's calling to live out the great purpose for which God made them: reflecting who he is and what he does. The Lord of Israel is the model according to which they are to develop. This is part of the purpose-determining reflection of God that flows out of the identity-defining connection with God.

The second aspect of this reflection, or double refraction, is the illumination of creation with that reflection of God. This universal reflection is expressed in the command of God to his image to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. While this is about procreation and filling the earth with offspring, it is also about much more: the command is about filling the earth with image-bearing offspring who reflect God.[115] The more image-bearers that exist, the greater the reflection and the further that reflection can shine. God desires and calls his image to extend the garden-sanctuary of his dwelling outward through their reflection of him. Very early on in scripture, we catch a glimpse of a missionary God who desires his people to reflect him and make him known.[116]

Glory

Before addressing the issue of glory in the imago Dei, it is important to address to the issue of human dignity as it relates to the image of God. The connection of these two realities

115. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: a Biblical Theology of Idolatry*, 131.

116. Walter C. Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 10.

will be apparent shortly. Human identity as the image of God is an identity of dignity and significance and this dignity is dependent on the original which it images.

The text of Genesis 1 confirms the dignity of the image of God in a number of ways. First is the location in which the author places the creation of humanity within the text. "Man's creation by God comes as the last and highest phase of God's creative activity."[117] The change in language between Genesis 1:1-25 and 1:26-27 highlights this climax of God's creativity.[118] Instead of the phrases "God said" and "let there be," the phrase "let us make man in our image" is utilized implying some sort of a heavenly deliberation taking place as the image of God is created.[119] Another distinction setting apart humanity as the most dignified of all creation is found in Genesis 2:7 when God breathes into Adam's nostrils the breath of life. The "animating breath" of God is not available to any of God's other creations; this is an act reserved solely for God's image.[120] Another significant factor which distinguishes humanity from the rest of God's creation is the image's God-given purpose. Only humans are given the purpose of representing and reflecting God. Yet another significant distinction between humanity and the rest of God's creation is the fact that God communicates directly to mankind issuing his primordial law in Genesis 2:16-17. This indicates that his relationship with humanity is very different than his relationship with the rest of creation thus setting humanity aside as more dignified than the rest of creation.

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117. Feinberg, "Image of God," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 129.

118. Feinberg, "Image of God," 129.

119. There are two main views as to the identity of the "us" and "our" in Genesis 1:26: the heavenly court or the three persons of the trinity. It is beyond the scope of this current study to delve any deeper into this question.

120. Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, 768.

The dignity of humanity climaxes with the creation of humanity in the image and likeness of God. Non-human living creatures are created "each according to its kind" whereas human beings are created in God's image and after his likeness (Genesis 1:21, 24 and Genesis 1:26). Unlike other creatures, humanity is not like themselves as they share a likeness to their creator which sets them apart as creatures of dignity and significance. On the dignity of humanity as it relates to dominion, Towner writes "… if human beings alone are invited into personal relationship with God and that relationship empowers human beings to exercise rule in the earth, then we are dealing with a very high view of human nature indeed!"[121] Sailhamer concisely sums this up: "They (Adam and Eve) didn't have to ask who am I? They were at home in God's world and understood the dignity of their identity as the image of God."[122] Every human being is created in the image of God and has value and dignity, as a direct result of the imago Dei.

It is now time to turn to the glory which is a result of humanity's creation in God's image. While dignity and glory are related in the imago Dei, there is a distinction between them that becomes more evident later on in scripture. Beale accurately points out that there are two main aspects of God's glory as it relates to his relationship with his image. The first aspect of glory as it relates to the image of God is the external manifestation of the glory of God in the expression of his attributes in history towards Israel and his conferring of glory onto his image.[123] This is glory as a possession of God that Israel shared in because of its close proximity to God and as the recipient of his historical acts. The second aspect of glory as it relates to the image of God is the external manifestation of Israel's reflection of this glory in themselves.[124]

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121. Towner, "Clones of God," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 59, no. 4.

122. Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound: A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account*, 152.

123. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry*, 90.

124. Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 90.

In the garden, the glory of God and the image of God are together and closely associated in humanity. In biblical Hebrew, the word “glory” can literally be translated as heaviness or weightiness. The metaphorical definition of glory is not a far step off from the literal definition as it indicates importance, magnitude or praiseworthiness. When the Bible speaks of God's glory, it points to God as the most important and the most praiseworthy being in all of creation. In fact, in 1 Samuel 15:29, the phrase “Glory of Israel” is used as a moniker for God. There has never been anyone like him and there will never be anyone like him. He is incomparable and is the most glorious being in all of creation.[125]

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve have an intimate, unhindered relationship with this glorious God. They are so closely identified with God that they reflect who he is and what he does.[126] This includes the reflection of his glory. The identity-defining connection to God and the purpose determining reflection of God are the sole reasons for their glory because their glory is a derived glory as it is from God and it is for God. In fact, humanity's creation in God's image is designed to magnify God's glory.[127]

Psalm 8 is a hymn of praise on the creation narrative found in Genesis 1:26 – 28 and it paints a wonderful picture of God conferring his glory onto his image. Psalm 8:5 tells us that God "crowned" his image "with glory and honor." This passage makes it clear that the glory of humanity is not a result of anything mankind has done, it is a derived glory which is a gift from God and the result of a close relationship with God. The image of God is not God but is like

125. Isaiah 46:8-10, 46:9; Jeremiah 50:44.

126. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*, 65.

127. The psalms are full of exhortation for God’s people to give him glory.

God, even in his or her glorious nature. Therefore, in the pre-fall image of God, there is a close association between image and glory.[128]

What is clear about the identity-defining connection to God and the purpose-determining reflection of God is the end game or ultimate goal. The end game of the image's connection and reflection is filling the entire earth with the glory of God.[129] In fact, the end game of all creation is the glory of God.[130] Genesis 1-2 informs us that we live in a God-centered universe and we were created in his image both by him and for his glory. Humanity was then commissioned to reflect that glory to the world around them. In fact, Oden insightfully links the eternal glory of God with the telos of his image writing, "Human happiness is seen in relation to the truly happy, the infinitely blessed One. All creatures are in some way capable of sharing in God's happiness…Thus the glory of the Creator and the happiness of creatures are inseparable..."[131] What began with the initial command to God's image to fill the earth with image bearers reflecting his glory, then continued with the glory of God descending on the tabernacle and the temple, and then came to fulfillment with the arrival of the glorious and perfect image of God in the person of Jesus Christ. As we will see, this perfect image is both the standard and enabler of men and women to become the glorious image that God intended in Genesis 1-2. This glory is the end goal of creation and the telos of the imago Dei. Revelation 21 paints clear picture of the fulfillment of God's intentions for humanity with the church appearing in its future glorified existence (Revelation 21:1-2). This is the final realization of the kingdom of God: the church of

128. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*, 155.

129. See Numbers 14:21.

130. Thomas C. Oden, *The Living God*, vol. 1, Systematic Theology (Peabody: Prince, 1998), 258.

131. Oden, *The Living God*, 259.

God becoming the full image of God connected to God and representing and reflecting God as intended in Genesis 1-2.[132] The symbolism of Revelation 21, especially verses 18-21 highlights the glory of God in its fullest expression as mirrored and reflected by his church. "Such imagery portrays the purity of the bride and her splendor in mirroring the glory of God."[133] Humanity exists to glorify God and enjoy him forever and Revelation reveals the fulfillment of our enjoyment of God and our glorification of God as the full expression of the image of God. This is a crystal-clear picture of the imago Dei as an identity-defining connection to God resulting in a purpose-determining reflection of God, reflecting the glory of God to the whole world.

An Excursive Question: Is the Image of God an Individual or Communal Identity?

Before moving forward to Act 2, it is important to address the issue of the communal nature of the image of God. There is much debate as to whether the image of God is an individual identity or a communal identity. Essentially, the question is: "Can an individual claim the identity as one created in the image of God or is it a communal identity?" Simply put, the answer to the question is "Yes." The image of God is both an individual identity and a corporate identity; there is a Biblical tension between these two aspects of the imago Dei. Unfortunately, so much of western culture's focus on the autonomous self seeps its way into western theology and puts the focus primarily on the individual. The end result is a focus on an autonomous individual who attempts to distinguish himself from others so as to secure his significance through this differentiation. The problem is that western culture's autonomous self is a creation of humankind and is not a biblical depiction of the imago Dei. While there are both references to

132. Alan F. Johnson, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Revelation*, ed. Longman Tremper and David E. Garland, Rev (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), chap. 21, vs. 18-21, Kindle.

133. Johnson, *Revelation*, chap. 21, vs 18-21.

the individual as one created in the image of God and the community of faith as those created in the image of God, the focus is on the individual image of God living out their identity in the corporate identity of the communal image of God because it is in the community of God where the individual people of God find their identity as the image of God in relationship with God. It is also in the community of God where the individual people of God are progressively transformed into the image of God.

The singular references to the image of God are found in Genesis 1:27, Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9. Genesis 1:27 states, "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created *him*."[134] While the next phrase of that passage goes on to use a plural pronoun thus highlighting the tension between the singular and plural aspects of the image of God, the first phrase undeniably uses the singular pronoun "him" to refer to the image of God. Genesis 5:1 also utilizes this same singular pronoun, "When God created man, he made *him* in the likeness of God."[135] Genesis 9:6 does the exact same thing: "'Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made *man* in his own image.'"[136] In the prohibition of murder found in Genesis 9:6, there is the implication that the image of God is an individual identity. In the first two stanzas of the passage, the lex talionis law of retribution is cited as punishment for the taking of an individual's life. When a person takes the life of another individual created the image of God, his or her life is to be taken in return. Here, the image of God is an individual identity. Additionally, James 3:9 suggests that specific, individual people are created in the image of God as it is most often individuals that are cursed or murdered. In each of these individual references

134. Emphasis mine.

135. Emphasis mine.

136. Emphasis mine.

to the image of God it is important to note that the basis for that status is their membership in the human race.[137]

The plural references to the image or God, explicit or implicit, are more prevalent in scripture. The final phrase of Genesis 1:27 concludes with a plural pronoun referring to the imago Dei: "male and female he created *them*." [138] The focus is on Adam and Eve, and those they represent, as the people of God. The emphasis on male and female highlights the communal identity of the image. In this case it is the two individuals, Adam and Eve, which make up the communal image of God. While Genesis 5:1 uses a singular pronoun to refer to the image of God, Genesis 5:2 utilizes the plural pronoun "them" to refer to the image of God. The plural nature of the image of God becomes even more evident in the New Testament as Paul and others address the transformation of the corporate church into the image of God.[139] Romans 8:29 connects all believers to the image of God using the plural "those." Furthermore, it is the corporate "we" that will bear the image of Jesus in 1 Corinthians 15:49. Additionally, progressive transformation into the image of God is experienced by the plural "we all" in 2 Corinthians 3:18. Lastly, when the transformed imago Dei is depicted in all its glory in Revelation 21, it is the plural identity of the corporate church as the holy city, or the new Jerusalem, that is the focus of the passage (Revelation 21:1-4, 10-21).

On the tension between the singular and plural nature of the image of God, Kilner writes:

> …referring to the particular people as being in God's image is legitimate but that is always in the context of—and never separate from—their identity as (members of) humanity. Speaking of all humanity as created in God's image is legitimate as well; but that is inclusive of—not to the exclusion of—particular human beings. Connecting God's

137. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*, 87.

138. Emphasis mine.

139. Towner, "Clones of God," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 59, no. 4.

> image both to humankind as a whole and to each of the humans who constitute that "kind" guards against the destructive overemphasis on individuals or collectives.[140]

Therefore, the image of God is both an individual and communal identity, and both of these identities should be held in a healthy tension.

Act 2: Subversion of The Image of God and Perversion of Human Identity

Introduction

It is important to note here that there is much left unsaid regarding the identity-defining, purpose-determining reflection of the image of God in the Old Testament. If the information regarding the representation and reflection of God's image in the Old Testament seems ambiguous, it is because on some level, it *is* ambiguous. In the Old Testament, the image of God as both an identity-defining connection and a purpose-determining reflection is not fully defined. In fact, the language of the image of God seems to disappear altogether after the calling of Abraham in Genesis 12. However, while the language of the image may disappear, the image of God as a concept is still very much present in scripture. Kilner calls the image of God a "placeholder" or a "hermeneutical lens" "through which the reader is better able to understand the significance of what happens in history and where God's people are headed."[141] The creation account and the image language of Genesis casts a shadow over the rest of the biblical canon as the details of the imago Dei are left to be explained.[142] To understand the image of God means not looking going back to Genesis, but also looking ahead to the ultimate image of God.[143] The

140. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*, 87-88.

141. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 40.

142. Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: the Image of God and Its Inversion,* 43.

143. Jones and Barbeau, *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age: Explorations in Theological Anthropology*, 56.

New Testament reveals God's intentions for humanity as he unveils the clearest possible picture of the image of God.

As we transition from Act 1 to Act 2, it is important to note that even in the creation account of Genesis 1-2, Adam and Eve are not the full expression of the image of God in its identity-defining connection and purpose-determining reflection. Adam and Eve still have further to go before becoming the full image of God.[144] This is evident in the possibility of their death in Genesis 2:17 and their act of sinful disobedience in Genesis 3:6.[145] Furthermore, God's command to them to "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it," in Genesis 1:28 implies that the earth was not yet filled with the full reflection and glory of God. The work of God is not yet done in that there is still more filling and reflecting to be done in and through the imago Dei.[146]

Transition from Act 1 to Act 2

Something tragic happens in Genesis 3 which turns the imago Dei upside down and impacts the identity of humanity in a catastrophic manner. If the storyline of Genesis 1-3 was turned into a movie script, the transition from the naked and unashamed state of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:25 to the appearance of the crafty serpent in Genesis 3:1 would be marked by subtly ominous music, foreshadowing the danger looming ahead.

The transition between Genesis 2 and 3 is one of the most dramatic transitions in all of scripture. Genesis 2 ends with a cursory description of the peaceful state of men and women and Genesis 3 begins with the sudden appearance of the "crafty" serpent. The connection between

144. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*, 13.

145. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 83.

146. Beale and Kim, *God Dwells among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth*, 34.

Genesis 2:25 and 3:1 is lost in the English translations as the transition is marked by a play on the two Hebrew words for "naked" (***'arom***) in 2:25 and "crafty" (***'arum***) in 3:1.[147] This alliterative play on words links the narratives of Genesis 2 and Genesis 3 while also providing a clue to the relationship between the serpent's craftiness and the innocence implied in the naked and unashamed state of Adam and Eve.[148] While there is little explanation for the origin of the serpent, it does not take long before his identity-deforming intentions are revealed.

The serpent wastes no time challenging the goodness and authority of the king and, as a result, the God-given identity of Adam and Eve with his onslaught of all-out lies and half-truths (Genesis 3:1-5). The serpent's sly verbal attack on God's character is a direct challenge to the identity of the image and his ultimate goal is to offset the balance of trust between God and humanity. The serpent does this by getting God's image to focus on what has been forbidden by the king rather than all of the blessings he has poured out on his subjects.[149] The serpent first asks Eve a doubt-inducing question designed to confuse her and create mistrust between her and the sovereign king of the universe. In doing this, the serpent is also challenging her core identity as it is clear now that humans can only find their true selves in an identity-defining connection to God. Her response to the serpent's question reveals her lack of actual clarity on God's command (Genesis 3:3). The only command God issued humanity was to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or the consequence would be death (Genesis 2:16-17). The serpent outright challenges God's authority, rule and ultimately his goodness by implying that God is holding out on them (Genesis 3:4-5). According to the serpent's lies, not only would they not die

147. Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 90.

148. Sailhamer, Kaiser, and Hess, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, 84.

149. Sailhamer, Kaiser, and Hess, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 86.

if they ate from the tree, they would also become more like God knowing good and evil. The irony, and tragedy, of this is that they were already like God as they had been created in his image.[150] The first act of human disobedience follows the snake's temptation with catastrophic consequences.

Before we delve into the impact of Adam of Eve's act of disobedience on their God-given identity, it is important here to recognize that this story is not a simple story about a snake and two humans; it is far more than that. The snake, the woman, and the man are not merely individuals but rather representatives of something greater, namely every man, every woman and Satan, the enemy of the king of creation. Sailhamer sums this up beautifully:

> The snake, the woman, and the man are not depicted as individuals involved in a personal crisis; rather they are representatives. We are left with the impression that this is not their story so much as it is our story, the story of mankind. With great skill the author presents these three participants as the "heads" of their race. The snake, on the one hand, and the man and the woman, on the other, are as two great nations embarking on a great struggle, a struggle that will find its conclusion only by an act of some distant "seed" or "offspring."[151]

This is crucial to keep in mind in light of sin's tragic impact on the image of God.

Images and Identity: Identity-Deforming Connections

Rival Telos

As we have seen, the Westminster Shorter Catechism discloses that "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever."[152] We were created to have God as our greatest enjoyment, desire, love, and longing in life. We were created by God and for God and he alone is

150. Sailhamer, Kaiser, and Hess, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 86.

151. Sailhamer, Kaiser, and Hess, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 89.

152. Williamson, *The Westminster Shorter Catechism: For Study Classes*, 1.

our telos. Humanity was created with an identity-defining connection to God and God alone. Mankind's act of disobedience introduces alternative options for humanity's identity-defining connection as it opens the door to rival telos'. Because of Adam and Eve's first act of disobedience, men and women can now love, live for, worship, and connect to something other than God. In fact, there is now a bent towards this rival telos. Before the fall, humanity was "like God" because of the connection to him in the garden. However, now, humanity is "like God" but no longer "with God."[153] Our identity as humans is not primarily found in being "like God" but rather in being "with God," enjoying the peace and fulfillment only he can provide as our telos.[154] However, sin now poses a major problem to God's intentions for his image as it prevents these intentions. It is no longer a given that God is our telos, the one to whom we look for peace and fulfillment. Since connection leads to reflection, this has the possibility to significantly alter human identity.

In the pages of scripture that follow, the biggest problem God's people face is the worship of idols. Simply put, an idol is a visible representation of an invisible deity. Although the idol is not God, worship is directed towards it as if it is God. Idols take God's place by providing a rival telos promising ultimate significance, security, and fulfillment. Instead of living life leaning towards the king of the universe, life is now lived leaning towards this idol. The ultimate hope is that the idol would provide the significance, security, and fulfillment which the people desired and which only God could provide. However, idolatry was prohibited by God because he had already made a visible representation of himself: man and woman (Exodus 20:3). These God-crafted idols were not to be worshipped, rather they were to worship God in an

153. Sailhamer, Kaiser, and Hess, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, 94.

154. Sailhamer, Kaiser, and Hess, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 94.

identity-defining connection to him while living out a purpose-determining reflection of him. However, these living, breathing idols, or images of God, began creating idols for themselves. They wanted to make gods in their own image rather than live in God's image. The images of God became creators of images which then de-formed them into those idolatrous images.[155] "The problem with sin is that instead of people being made in God's image, God is remade in the image of the people."[156] This leads to alternative unholy connections which are teleological in nature and thus subvert the image of God, perverting human identity. Instead of God's image-bearers, people are now idol-makers. Instead of being connected solely to God as telos, multiple teleological connections form. The imago Dei is no longer a priest who is a vice-regent of God, he is now attempting to dethrone God and be the sole regent. There are now other teleologic originals, instead of the true teleologic original humans were created to image. All of this led to a forfeiture of Adam and Eve's God-given identity and as a result, human identity became significantly less than what God intended. The identity-defining connection to God became an identity-deforming connection to other "gods."

Broken Covenant

As we have seen, Adam and Eve's disobedience led to the introduction of rival telos'. Humanity connects to these rival telos' through unholy connections, subverting the image of God and thus perverting human identity. Humanity's act of rebellion against the creator and king of the universe was not just a simple act of rebellion, it was humanity's rejection of God as their telos and thus a rejection of God's primordial law. Adam and Eve broke covenant with God

155. Exodus 32, which will be addressed later in this chapter, is the paradigm example of Israel's idolatry and their subsequent de-formation into the images of those idols.

156. Beale and Kim, *God Dwells among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth*, 50.

through disobedience to his command and this resulted in identity-deforming connections. One of the main problems of sin is that it disconnects humans from the source of their true identity and connects them to idols which then deform their identity, resulting in false identities. Sin is living out a connection to other gods in ways that radically affect who humans are and what they do.[157]

Through their disobedience, Adam and Eve rejected God's covenant ownership of them and attempted to find belonging in something or someone other than their creator. Right after Adam and Eve's disobedient act of rejecting God as telos, paradise instantaneously dissolves into a whirlwind of guilt, shame, blame, denial and alienation. This is a direct consequence of rejection of the king and his covenant which is simultaneously a rejection of humanity's identity as the image of God. The spiritual death that God promised as a result of breaking the covenant connection becomes humanity's reality as the delight of Eden vanishes in a mist. The first consequence is the opening of humanity's eyes and a resulting awareness of their nakedness. This is significant as the Hebrew word used for "naked" here is different than the Hebrew word for "naked "used in Genesis 2:25. The word for "naked" in Genesis 3:7 is a crystal-clear picture of humanity's alienation from God as it is used elsewhere in the Bible to describe God's judgment on his people for breaking covenant with him.[158] The effects of the fall go far beyond an awareness of physical nakedness, it is an awareness of being under God's judgment for breaking covenant with him.[159] In the midst of this newfound guilt and the resulting shame, Adam and Eve hide themselves from God. It is clear that something has drastically changed in

157. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*, 150.

158. See Isaiah 20:4, Ezekiel 16:39, 23:29, Micah 1:8, and Job 26:6 as a few examples of this use of the Hebrew word naked.

159. Sailhamer, Kaiser, and Hess, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, 84.

their relationship with God. The damage to Adam and Eve's identity-defining connection to God led to de-formation of their identity. When God questions them about eating from the tree, the blame game begins revealing the extent of the identity-deforming, relational alienation: Adam blames both God and Eve and then Eve points the finger at the serpent. Denial becomes the reality as humanity refuses to take responsibility for their rebellion against God. The immediate consequences of the fall are followed promptly by God's judgment on the serpent, the woman and the man. It is here that the king irrupts into a freshly fallen world with his judgment on his image's covenantal disobedience. [160]

It is important to note that up until Genesis 3, God has only blessed his creation. These three curses occur after the rebellion of humanity against God's rule. In the Mosaic Covenant, Israel was promised blessings for obedience to the covenant and curses for disobedience.[161] This is no different for Adam and Eve.[162] God answers his image's disobedience with curses. The first curse is reserved for the serpent and the second curse is directed towards the woman.[163] Before the fall, God's command to humanity in Genesis 1:28 was, "'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it…'" indicating that childbirth was a blessing and part of the human experience. Now, however, childbirth is an experience defined by pain (Genesis 3:16). Furthermore, part of the curse on the woman is the corrosion and collapse of the woman's

160. Adam and Eve's disobedience and exile is a foreshadowing of Israel's disobedience and exile. All of this highlights God's faithful love in the midst of his image's faithlessness.

161. See Deuteronomy 28 for the blessings and curses of the Sinai Covenant.

162. See Genesis 2:16-17. The blessings of the primordial covenant are implied in the unimpeded connection of Adam and Eve to God. The curse of disobedience is death.

163. See Genesis 3:14-15. The ultimate curse for the snake is the protoevangelion in Genesis 3:15 which promises ultimate defeat at the hands of the seed of the woman. This is a primordial prophecy of the perfect image of God, Jesus Christ.

relationship with her husband.[164] The third and final curse is directed towards Adam since he listened to Eve's words instead of God's words (Genesis 3:17-19). As Eve learned, primary allegiance, trust, and obedience must be to God and God alone.[165] As for Adam, God curses the ground drastically increasing the difficulty of his work and significantly decreasing the pleasantness of Adam's work.[166] Sailhamer profoundly explicates the universal effects of this curse on the ground:

> In drawing a contrast between the condition of the 'land' before and after the fall, the author suggest that the present condition of the land is not the way it was intended to be. This present condition of the land is the result of humankind's rebellion. The author thus paves the way for a central motif in the world of biblical eschatology: the hope of "a new heaven and a new earth."[167]

Sailhammer continues on to state that the reversal of the condition of the land in Genesis and the subversion of the image of God in humanity both demonstrate the death sentence that has fallen over the king's good creation (Genesis 3:18-19).[168] Obviously, the breaking of covenant with God has a profound impact on all of creation, including God's identity-defining connection with humanity. Adam and Eve are no longer solely in the image of God; they are also in the image of things other than God.

The consequences of the broken covenant on human identity continues in God's exile of Adam and Eve from his presence in the garden (Genesis 3:23-24). They are forced out of their

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164. D. A. Carson, *The God Who Is There: Finding Your Place in God's Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010), 38.

165. Carson, *The God Who Is There*, 39.

166. Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 41.

167. Sailhamer, Kaiser, and Hess, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, 92.

168. Sailhamer, Kaiser, and Hess, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 93.

true home as Adam and Eve no longer live in the intimate, unhindered, covenant relationship with God which existed in the garden. Adam and Eve are exiled from the garden, in part, so as not to live forever under the judgment of God. God exiles Adam and Eve to protect them from eating the fruit of the tree of life and thus existing forever in this sinful state; to live forever in this sinful state would be an eternity of misery, suffering, brokenness, pain, conflict, chaos, and separation from the king who created them thus altering human identity forever (Genesis 3:22). As will be seen, God has bigger plans for his much-loved image that depend upon his faithfulness. After driving Adam and Eve out of the Garden, God places cherubim to guard the tree of life in Genesis 3:24.

As seen above, cherubim guarding the tree of life point forward to yet another covenant and part of it, the Ten Commandments, were housed in the ark of the covenant. On both sides of the mercy seat, which sat on top of the ark, two cherubim stood guard facing each other. Under the Mosaic Covenant, this was the place that God would speak to his people through the representative high priest. It is in this place that fellowship with God was restored to his image. This account of the cherubim in Genesis 3:24 points forward to the Sinaitic covenant through which humankind's broken fellowship with God could be restored. Sailhamer writes, "In the covenant humankind is returned to the state man originally enjoyed in Genesis 2:15, that is, as one who serves, obeys, and enjoys the blessing of God."[169] Furthermore, the Mosaic Covenant is ultimately just a shadow of the new covenant through which God would powerfully irrupt into this world through Jesus, who ultimately and finally restores fellowship with God and thus re-creates human identity, fulfilling God's original intentions for his image.

169. Sailhamer, Kaiser, and Hess, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 95.

However, despite this future hope, there is an increasing disconnection between God and his people throughout the entire Old Testament. Israel's history is one of covenant-breaking idolatry which results in a growing separation between God and his image. The exile experienced by Adam and Eve becomes the eventual fate of both the northern and southern kingdoms for the exact same reason: a breach of covenant resulting in identity-deforming connections. God's people were not living out an identity-defining connection to him resulting in a purpose-determining reflection of him. As the first testament closes out, the failure of Adam and Eve to keep covenant with God is echoed by Israel's failure to keep covenant with God and there seems to be no answer for the identity-deforming connections resulting from sin.

Declaration of Independence

When the serpent tempted Eve in Genesis 3:1, he challenged the goodness of God and thus offset the balance of trust and obedience between humanity and their creator.[170] The snake's primary challenge to God's image was to become like God in a different way than God intended. This was a direct challenge to humanity's identity as the imago Dei. In response to the serpent's temptation, Eve sees that "the tree was *good* for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise" and she took its fruit and ate it, also giving it to her husband (Genesis 3:6, emphasis mine). On the surface this looks straightforward, but there is a theological reality here that extends far beyond the actions of the narrative. Up until this point in the Genesis narrative, God is the only one who sees and then evaluates his creation as good. This is his right as the creator and king of his creation; he defines reality and he determines what is good and bad, right and wrong. However, at the time when Eve sees and evaluates the tree as

170. Sailhamer, Kaiser, and Hess, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 86.

good, she outright rejects God's authority as king, thus rejecting her identity as the image of God. Eve ultimately chooses to be her own authority and define her own identity. Carson does a great job of explicating this rebellion in his book "The God Who is There: Finding Your Place in God's story:" "…instead of delighting in the wisdom of her Maker, she is pronouncing, independently, her own choices as to what is good and evil. She is becoming 'like God,' claiming the sort of independence that belongs only to God, the moral absoluteness that belongs only to God."[171] Carson continues on to describe this as the "de-god-ing of God" so that humanity can then become their own god and find their identity independently from God.[172] Sin is much more than a specific action; sin is a declaration of independence from the rule of God, "an illicit reach of unbelief, an assertion of human autonomy to doubt God and know good and evil apart from him." [173] Thus, sin is the search for life, meaning and identity apart from the creator of humanity. At the core of sin and rebellion against the king is a quest for wisdom and goodness apart from God, his provision and humanity's God-given identity as people created in God's image.[174]

Earlier, we concluded that human identity is dependent in nature. Declaring independence from God does not result in an independent identity, rather it results in an identity independent from God but dependent upon another original. Adam and Eve's declaration of independence from God by rejecting his commands, and ultimately their identity, resulted in dependent, identity-deforming connections with substitute originals which are less than God.

171. Carson, *The God Who Is There: Finding Your Place in God's Story*, 33.

172. Carson, *The God Who Is There*, 33.

173. Waltke and Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach*, 259.

174. Sailhamer, Kaiser, and Hess, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, 86.

Images and Purpose: Purpose-Corrupting Reflections

We have looked at the power of sin and idolatry in the image's connection to God and we have seen how these rival connections negatively impact humanity's identity. Next, the impact of sin and idolatry on the image's God-given purpose will be analyzed. These identity-deforming connections lead to purpose-corrupting reflections which are reflections less than the reflection of God. This includes a rival representation, a rival refraction and a loss of glory.

Rival Representation

As vice regents and priests of God, Adam and Eve's purpose was to guard and protect the garden and mediate the divine presence of God. Their failure to guard the garden and protect the divine presence through disobedience to God's word was a rejection of their God-given purpose as his divine representative. As representatives of God, they failed to subdue creation as God did in Genesis 1 and instead of subduing creation, they were subdued by the snake, who was part of creation.[175] Adam and Eve's failure as representative priests and vice regents is further highlighted by God's placement of the cherubim to protect the garden and their expulsion from the garden. In rejecting their purpose as representatives of God, they became representatives of their idols as creation moved from a God—centered world to a self—centered world. Instead of mediating God as king and expanding his kingdom, Adam and Eve would now mediate the kingdoms of their idols and attempt to further those kingdoms. They became priests and vice regents of a rival king and a rival kingdom. Ultimately, they became representations of a rival telos. They lost their God-given purpose of representing him to all of creation. Sin derailed and

175. God subdues creation repeatedly in Genesis 1 by taking elemental matter, which is without form and void, and creating the universe, and the world, as we know it. He takes an unformed chaos and subdues it creating the universe as we know it.

corrupted the image's God-given purpose and as a result, human identity became less then God intended. The identity-deforming connections led to purpose-corrupting reflections.

Rival Refraction

Instead of reflecting who God is and what God does, Adam and Eve's reflection after the fall is that of idols; they began reflecting the idols they worshiped. 1 Corinthians 15:49 tells us that all humanity bears the image of Adam. Like Adam, all humanity has a bent towards connecting teleologically to idols and thus we end up reflecting these idols. In Romans 12:1-2, Paul refers to this as being conformed to the world. Instead of orienting ourselves towards God as a model to develop into, we disorient ourselves and turn to idols as a model to develop into. The end result is shame, hiding, blame, and finger-pointing (Genesis 3:11-12). This was true of Adam and Eve and it was true of the nation of Israel. Humanity sidetracked God's intentions for human identity and human purpose and as a result they are less than God intended. This bearing of the image of Adam and the reflection of idols will continue until someone or something intervenes.

The second aspect of refraction is illuminating creation with the reflection of God. However, after the fall humans illuminate creation with the rival reflection of idols. Because of our rival reflection, the image of God can no longer effectively illuminate creation with the reflection of God. Now, the image of God is tragically illuminating creation with the reflection of idols. Instead of making God known to the people around them, they are making the idols known and, as a result, God's name is dishonored. The golden calf incident below is the prime example of what repeatedly happens throughout the history of Israel. Just like Adam and Eve's sin of idolatry and rival reflection led to exile, both the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom's sin of idolatry and resulting rival reflection ended with their exile in Assyria in

Babylon respectively (2 Kings 17:6-23 and 2 Kings 25:1-22). They failed in their God-given purpose and God disciplined them for their disobedience. They inherited the curses of the Mosaic Covenant for this disobedience.

Decrease of Glory

The fall of humanity has a significant impact on the glory of mankind created in the image of God. Before addressing the issue of glory in the image, it is important first to address the impact of the fall on the image of God as it relates to human dignity. Despite some Biblical scholars using the terms "damaged," "effaced," or "lost" to refer to the image of God after the fall, the biblical evidence suggests this is not the case. The account of the generations of Adam in Genesis 5:1-3 gives no indication that the image of God has been lost or damaged.[176] Genesis 9:6 further supports this as the image of God is cited in a passage on the horrific nature of murder. Murder is reprehensible because it is not just an attack on a human being, it is also an attack against God since humanity has been created in God's image. Despite the damage of the fall on humanity, this passage implies that the image of God is still very much present in humanity. James 3:9 further supports this as the image of God in humanity is referenced in a passage on the damaging effects of the human tongue. James writes, "With it (the tongue) we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God." There is absolutely no indication in James that the image of God has been lost, effaced or damaged. In fact, James assumes the opposite. This means that despite the negative impact of the fall on humanity, the image of God and thus human dignity remains. The dignity of human identity does not change even after the fall because although sin damaged humanity after the fall, there is no biblical

176. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*, 137.

support that Adam and Eve's initial sin damaged the image of God.[177] The reason for this will be evident shortly.

However, while the fall did not efface the image of God in mankind or the image's dignity, it did negatively impact the image's glory resulting in a decrease of glory. The declaration of independence from God and the subsequent connection to another, lesser original, resulted in a decrease of glory. While God's image is still fully intact in post-fall humanity, the glory of God is not. This is a direct result of the identity-deforming connections to idols. In the sin and rebellion of idolatry, the image of God becomes so closely connected to shameful idolatrous images that humanity tragically begins reflecting these shameful images and their inglorious nature. In fact, Paul uses the powerful phrase "exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things" to describe this decrease in glory (Romans 1:23). In Jeremiah 2:11, God says "but my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit." The sin of idolatry in God's image acts like a repellent to his glory. Sin's impact on glory is both serious and tragic. 2 Corinthians 3:18 further supports this informing us that God's image needs transformation from "one degree of glory to another."[178] Thankfully, this decrease of glory in the image of God is not the end of the story.

177. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 45.

178. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 65.

The Golden Calf: The Paradigm for the Subversion of the Image of God and Perversion of Human Identity

Richard Lints insightfully points out that the paradigm for idolatry in the Old Testament is Israel's worship of the golden calf in Exodus 32.[179] The story of the golden calf is an unwelcome interruption in Exodus after the issuing of the Sinai Covenant and in the middle of chapters on tabernacle worship. The account begins as Moses is still on the mountain in God's presence. In the Israelites' estimation, Moses is taking too much time returning from his encounter with God and they became impatient and command Aaron to create gods they could worshipfully connect to in a teleological way (Exodus 32:1). God was failing to act as they wanted him to and, in their impatience, they decided to create a god in their own image. So, Aaron built a golden calf by melting down their gold jewelry, an altar was built and the next day they worshiped and sacrificed to this "god" (Exodus 32:2-6). They made this golden calf their telos looking toward it to provide the good life they so desired. They were declaring their independence from God and as a result were declaring dependence on a non-living statue made by human hands that literally had no eyes to see or ears to hear. This declaration of independence was a reenactment of what Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden. Like Adam and Eve, this declaration of independence from God was a clear breach of his covenant. In the Mosaic Covenant, issued a few chapters earlier, God clearly commanded his image to have no other gods besides him and to not create or worship carved images or idols (Exodus 20:3-6). While their dignity as creatures made in the image of God remained intact, their glory did not. They exchanged "the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and

179. Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its Inversion*, 89. Much of this section is adapted from Lints' insights.

animals and creeping things" (Romans 1:23). They exchanged the infinitely beautiful glory of God for the inglorious shame of idols and the result was a purpose-corrupting reflection. Instead of reflecting God, they reflected the idols. This is evident in a couple of places in the biblical text. In Exodus 32:9 the Lord is talking to Moses and he refers to Israel as a "stiff-necked people." God uses this moniker again to refer to Israel in Exodus 33:3. The implication here is that Israel is becoming like the golden calf idol which is literally stiff-necked. A few verses later in this narrative, Moses takes the golden calf and burns it, grinds it to powder, scatters it over the water and then makes the nation of Israel drink it (Exodus 32:20). The act of drinking the dust of these idols is partly symbolic in nature. Their worship of the golden calf is equated with them taking the substance of idols into their bodies and incorporating it into who they are. This visual portrays the intimacy of the identity-forming connection of worship. The telos to which we connect in worship becomes a part of who we are and thus determines our reflection. Further support of this truth is seen in God's evaluation of his people throughout the Old Testament. Unfortunately, this is an identity-deforming connection because it is with a telos that is less than God and as a result, less than God's intentions for his image. It is not a coincidence that one of God's consistent evaluations of his people throughout scripture is that they have eyes but do not see, and ears but do not hear.[180] Regardless of how creative a human being might be, a man-made idol crafted from elemental matter will always have eyes that fail to see and ears that fail to hear. As a result of their identity-deforming connections to these stiff-necked, blind and deaf idols, they were becoming spiritually stiff-necked, blind and deaf. This highlights the reality that humanity's identity-deforming connections to idols resulted in a purpose-corrupting reflection of

180. See Jeremiah 5:21, Isaiah 6:10, Ezekiel 12:2 Matthew 13:15, and Mark 8:18.

those idols. They are reflecting those idols and illuminating creation with this inglorious, shameful reflection. This is the subversion of the imago Dei and a perversion of human identity.

Act 3: Re-Created in the Image of God: Renewal of Human Identity

The New Testament and the Image of God

It has been noted that after Genesis 9, the phrase and the theological concept of the image of God virtually disappears from the language of the Biblical text. Lints points out that this is because the images of idols have replaced the image of God in humanity.[181] He insightfully notes that the absence of the language of the image of God after Genesis 9 is intentional and is not due to the absence of the theological concept of the image of God. Rather, it is merely a change of terms in the canon which indicative of a much deeper theological truth. Lints writes:

> …at the point where the language of image drops out, the language of idolatry becomes prominent; and secondly, the re-emergence of the language of "imaging" is most strongly connected to the arrival of Jesus Christ, who is both the restorer of the image of God and the one who ultimately breaks the power of the idols by overcoming the temptations of the evil one.[182]

Essentially, the image of God and the images of idols are just two different sides of the same coin.[183] Humanity, as the image of God, was made in such a way as to desire something greater than themselves, something which would bring them peace, significance, security, and wholeness. This would lead humanity in one of two directions: either towards a desire for their creator as originally intended, or towards a desire to replace their creator with something in

181. Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its Inversion,* 80.

182. Lints, *Identity and Idolatry,* 80.

183. Lints, *Identity and Idolatry,* 35.

creation over which they could exert some semblance of control.[184] In this understanding, the theology of the image of God is very much present throughout the Hebrew Bible in the theology of idol worship. Therefore, when the theological concept of the image of God becomes crystal clear in the New Testament, it is not by accident or by coincidence.

In the New Testament, there are two distinct categories of usages of the phrase "image of God."[185] The first category includes the passages that refer to Jesus as "the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4, Colossians 1:15, and Hebrews 1:2-3). The second distinct set of passages refer to Christians and their renewal into the image of God in Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 4:22-24, Romans 8:29, and Colossians 3:10). This section will address the first category of usage and leave the latter for a subsequent section.

The New Testament is unabashedly clear that Jesus is the image of God. Feinberg sums this up writing, "the New Testament clearly designates Jesus Christ to be the image of God par excellence…"[186] The impact of this reality is massive for all of us who have been created in the image of God: Jesus is the model for the image of God, he is the destiny for the image of God and he is the enabler of the image of God.

First, Jesus is the model for the image of God. Colossians 1:15 reports that Jesus is "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation." 2 Corinthians 4:4 emphatically states that Jesus is "the image of God." As the image of God, Jesus is God's intention for human identity. Lints rightly posits that the imago Dei finds its fullest theological significance in Jesus.[187] Jesus is what God intended for human identity from the beginning and he clearly

184. Lints, *Identity and Idolatry,* 80.

185. Gardoski, "The Imago Dei Revisited," 30-31.

186. Feinberg, "Image of God," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 129, 244.

187. Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its Inversion*, 121.

reveals who humans were intended to be as the image of God. Jesus is the model according to which we are to develop.

Adam failed to live out his identity-defining connection to God and his purpose-determining reflection of God through his disobedience. Furthermore, Israel failed to live out their identity-defining connection to God and their purpose-determining reflection of God. Not only did they not subdue creation, they ended up worshiping creation through their detestable acts of idolatry. Both Adam and Israel failed to live out their identity as the image of God. However, Jesus, as the perfect model of the image of God, succeeded where both Adam and Israel failed. Jesus was victorious over the serpent's temptations thus subduing creation (Matthew 4:1-11). Furthermore, he was obedient to God's word. Jesus as the model reveals God's intentions for humanity. This is just as true in Jesus' perfect connection to God as it is in his perfect reflection of God. If we want to know what God intended for our identity-defining connection to him and our purpose-determining reflection of him, we should look to Jesus Christ. If we want to truly understand God's intention for his image, we cannot look to Adam or Israel, we must look to Jesus.[188]

Second, Jesus is the destiny for the image of God. 2 Corinthians 3 gives us a high definition picture of this destiny in which God's people "are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another." This passage depicts an ongoing transformation of God's people into his image pulling back the veil to reveal human destiny. This destiny will not be reached until after death when people's transformation into the image of God in Christ is

188. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*, 275.

complete.[189] Jesus as the destiny of God's people gives great hope in that it paints a clear picture of where God is taking his people despite the roadblocks and setbacks on the journey.

Lastly, Jesus is the enabler of the image of God in humanity. He is the way humans can be transformed into the image of God; it is Jesus alone who enables the people of God to become what God intended. Through their connection, or union, with Jesus, God is rescuing, restoring, and redeeming his people into his image.[190] It is only in Christ, the perfect image of God, that we are transformed into the image-bearers we were originally intended to be.[191]

The Perfect Image and Identity: An Ever-Deepening Identity-Defining Connection to God

Act 1emphasized humanity's primal connection to God. Act 2 revealed the tragic impact of sin on this connection and the subsequent identity-deforming connections to idols which were formed. The appearing of the perfect image in Act Three is the ultimate hope for the re-creation of the image of God in humanity through an ever-deepening connection to God and an ever-increasing reflection of God. This ever-deepening connection to God is best understood through the same three themes presented in Act One and Two.

The Ultimate Telos

In the previous two acts, it was discussed how the garden of Eden was described in striking similarity to both the tabernacle and the temple. The imagery of all three paints the picture of abounding life and absolute beauty in all its reflective brilliance. All of this imagery pointed to the reality that these locations were the dwelling place of God amidst his people. Upon Jesus' arrival, there is a shift from the physical, architectural buildings as a dwelling place

189. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 132.

190. Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its Inversion*, 120.

191. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, 87.

of God to the person of Jesus as the dwelling place of God.[192] Just as the glory of God would rest on and fill the tabernacle and the temple, God's glory rested on and filled Jesus. In John 1:14, John writes, "and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we've seen his glory, glory as of the only son from the father, full of grace and truth." Instead of God's glorious presence dwelling in the tabernacle and the temple, it is now found in Jesus.

Earlier, it was established that the presence of God in the garden is the telos of mankind. The revelation of God in Jesus, the perfect image of God, is the telos of all creation.[193] As the telos of creation, Jesus is both the God we enjoy and the one that makes it possible for us to enjoy him. In Jesus, God reveals himself to his image, blesses his image, communicates with his image, and dwells with his image in a way that is even more evident than in the garden of Eden. The imagery of abundant life in the tabernacle and the temple which represented the true life that comes only from the presence of God is now found in Jesus, the telos of creation (John 10:10).

Additionally, it is in and through Jesus that the power of the rival telos is broken. Idolatry, and its identity-deforming connections, has held sway over God's people since the fall of humanity in the garden of Eden. Instead of living out their identity-defining connection to God and their purpose-determining reflection of God, they repeatedly turned to idols to satisfy their need for significance, fulfillment and security. They were under the power of a rival telos in the form of idols. Jesus emphatically breaks the power of idols through his victory over sin and death which then frees God's image to return to him as their telos.

The New Covenant

192. Beale and Kim, *God Dwells among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth*, 79.

193. Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its Inversion*, 121.

It has been established that it is in a covenant relationship with God that humans find and live out their identity as the image of God. God established a covenant with Adam and Eve and then Israel, but both failed to receive the full blessings of covenant obedience. The repeated idolatry of Israel was a continual breach of covenant between God and his image. As a result, they joined themselves to idols which they then reflected. Not only does Jesus break the power of idolatry, he also removes the barrier of sin through his life, death, and resurrection. It is through the perfect image of God, his work on the cross, and his resurrection from the dead that the way is paved for a new covenant which removes the barrier of sin and enables God's image to live as God intended. In the incarnation, Jesus comes to remove sin and establishes the opportunity for a much more intimate connection to God through a better covenant, of which the previous one was just a shadow. The fulfillment of mankind actually becoming God's image requires a close connection, or union, with Christ. This intimate connection with God in Christ gives people a distinctive identity.[194] 1 John 3:1 powerfully describes this identity as "children of God." Paul in Galatians tells us that as a result of our new covenant connection to God in Jesus, we can call God "Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6). Sin so powerfully impacted humanity's God-given identity and purpose as the image of God, that it had to be removed, or undressed, for an ever-deepening identity-defining connection to God to happen.[195] In Ephesians 4:22-24, Paul writes that Christians must "put off" the old sinful self and "put on" the new self, created after the likeness of God. This clear reference to humanity as the image of God is all about the undressing of the old self and the wearing of the new self which is a part and parcel of the ever-deepening, identity-defining connection to God established through the New Covenant. The

194. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*, 281.

195. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 26.

Mosaic covenant paved the way for this new covenant in Jesus which is not about external obedience to the law but about the creation of a new humanity.[196] In this new covenant the image of God now has fellowship with God through Jesus like no other time before. This is all because of the presence and work of the perfect image of God. In his life and miracles there is a reversing of the curses God pronounced on his image in Genesis 3. In his death and resurrection, we see an undoing of the death sentence issued in Genesis 3. However, being in Christ (connected to God) must proceed transformation into the image of God because this new covenant connection in Christ is the doorway to humanity's renewal and transformation into the image of God.

The Dependence of Faith

From the beginning, it has been God's intention that his image would be fully and utterly dependent on him. In fact, it was established that dependence on God is central to what the imago Dei means, as the phrase "image of God" implies dependence on God. It was also established that there is no such thing as human independence because humans, by nature, are dependent beings. By definition, images will reflect and what is depended on as ultimate will determine that reflection. When Jesus broke the power of idols, he opened up a new and better way for humanity to be fully and utterly dependent on God. The key question for humanity is: "Will the image of God depend on God as ultimate and, as a result, image God?" This is first and foremost a question of ultimate dependence. Revelation 13 contains a great example of the two choices of dependence which face humanity: people can either fully depend on God and thus image him as God intended or people can depend on the beast and become like him, literally bearing an image of the beast on their right hands or foreheads.[197] That same choice faces all of

196. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny,* 145.

197. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 158.

humanity: will people orient themselves towards God and image him or will they orient towards another image instead? The good news is that Jesus has broken the power of idolatry and the image's dependence on idols, thus paving the way for faith-driven dependence on God.

There are essentially two truths regarding this dependence on God. The first truth is that God enables.[198] God does all of the work. He created humans in his image. He is the faithful God who walked with his image through all of their unfaithfulness. He is the one who spoke through the prophets, infusing hope about a new covenant and a future coming redeemer who, unbeknownst to them, would come to this earth as the perfect image of God (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:26-29). He is the one who redeemed his image through the life, death, and resurrection of the perfect image. And as we will see, he's the one who is patiently transforming his people into the perfect image of his son.

The second truth about the dependence of faith and the image of God is that although God enables, humans must respond.[199] All of God's work on behalf of his image does not mean an absence of human effort. The primary human work is a response of full and utter dependence on the perfect image of God and his enabling work. On this foundation of faith Christians strip off the old humanity and put on the new humanity, which is the image of God in Christ. Colossians 3 and Ephesians 4:22-24 lay out in detail the putting away the old humanity and putting on the new humanity. 2 Corinthians 3:18 and Romans 12:2 both point to a continuous, progressive transformation into the image of God.[200] This continual, progressive transformation comes from a continuous dependence of faith on the person, pattern, and work of Jesus Christ.

198. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 252.

199. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 252.

200. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 254.

Kilner points out that this dependence of faith on Jesus is so powerful because "The very life and person of Christ is alive in them...The renewal of Christians is according to the image of God in Christ because it is actually Christ who is alive in them."[201]

The Perfect Image and Purpose: An Ever-Increasing Purpose-Determining Reflection of God

Representation

Adam as the image of God failed in his commission as a vice regent and priest of God. He was supposed to be a living, breathing image representing God. The primary goal behind this was to expand the kingdom of God. This was also Israel's commission from God. Both Adam and Israel failed miserably in their duties of protecting God's dwelling place, exercising dominion, and expanding God's dwelling place. However, where Adam and Israel failed, Jesus succeeded. And because of Jesus's model as a perfect representation of God, his victory over idolatry, sin and death, Adam's priestly calling can now be fulfilled in God's people.[202] 1 Peter 2:9 captures the re-created image's priestly calling to be a representative of God echoing both Adam and Israel's original commission (Genesis 1:26-28 and Exodus 19:6). Through Jesus, God's people can now live out their calling as a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a people for his own possession, so they may proclaim the excellencies of him who called them out of darkness into his marvelous light. Because of Jesus, God's people can be the royal priesthood he originally intended them to be. The apostle Paul further enlightens us as to what this representation looks like by calling Christians "ambassadors for Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:20). James Smith sums all of this up beautifully: "The citizens of the baptismal city are…chosen and

201. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 258.

202. Beale and Kim, *God Dwells among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth*, 33.

commissioned as God's image bearers, God's princes and princesses who are empowered to be witnesses of a coming kingdom and charged with the renewal of the world."[203] It is through Jesus Christ, the perfect and exact representation of God, that God's people become the divine representatives God originally intended them to be in Genesis 1.

Refraction

As stated in Acts One and Two, the first aspect of this refraction is reflecting God and the second is illuminating creation with that reflection. It is important to keep in mind that our reflection grows out of our connection and due to Jesus, we have an increasing actual reflection of God in Christ resulting from our special connection to God through Christ.[204] This reflection, along with the representation of God, define humanity's purpose as creatures made in the image of God.

Sin had to be removed for God's intention to come about. Kilner writes, "only by Christ becoming the likeness of humanity and dying a slave's death to pay the price for humanity's sin can people become free to fulfill their God-given destiny to become (conformed to) God's image."[205] Because of sin's removal through Jesus and our connection to God, there is a glorious destiny in store for God's image: as the image of God, Christians will fully bear and reflect the perfect image of God. We will be like Jesus because we will see him as he is (1 John 3:2). In 1 Corinthians 15:49 Paul writes that God's people will "bear the image of the man of heaven," a clear reference to the perfect image of God, Jesus himself. Paul refers again to the image of

203. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, 115.

204. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*, 273.

205. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 70.

God's glorious destiny in Romans 8:29 with the words, "for those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son."

Colossians 3:10 is about the renewal of the body of Christ into the image of God. In this passage Paul implicitly refers to Genesis 1 in two different ways. First, in writing about renewal into the image of God, he refers to this renewal as “after the image of its creator." This is a clear reference back to Genesis 1:26-27 when God creates Adam and Eve in his image. The second reference is a little more subtle. Paul informs the Colossians that they are being renewed “in knowledge, after the image of its creator." Eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil led Adam and Eve to decide for themselves what was good and not good; they turned away from God’s knowledge and relied on their own knowledge. This led to a distortion of their knowledge of God, themselves, and of creation. This corrupted knowledge ultimately led them away from God and into idolatry. However, now in Jesus, with the putting on of the new self, the image of God is being renewed in knowledge, after the image of its creator. This is the knowledge of good and evil that was shunned by God’s image in the garden; it is God’s knowledge. The renewal into the image of God is, in part, the renewal of knowledge of who God is and who we are as his creation. The fall took us away from this and we ended up chasing after idols. In Christ, we are led back to God and his knowledge and we end up connecting to him, and as a result increasingly reflect him to the world around us.

The second aspect of this refraction is to illuminate creation with that reflection. This goes back to God's original command to Adam and Eve in the Garden in Genesis 1:28 where he tells them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. This was about expanding the dwelling place of God with image-bearing offspring who also reflect God. The God of creation did not all of a sudden become a missionary God when he appeared on this earth in the form of a man. The

Old Testament reveals the same missionary God with the same heart for people as does the New Testament. He is, in both testaments, a missionary God who desires his image to reflect him and make him known to the surrounding nations. The same themes evident in Genesis 1:28, that of multiplying, filling the earth, and the conferring of authority are very much present in Matthew 28:18-20.[206] Just as in the initial commission to Adam, Jesus is telling his followers in the Great Commission to expand the kingdom of God by expanding the reflection of God. First, as the people of God are transformed more and more into the perfect image of God, creation is illuminated with the increasing reflection of God and as a result God is glorified. Second, as people become part of the body of Christ through faith in Jesus, the reflection of God also grows brighter and creation is illuminated with that increasing reflection. This is the purpose determining-reflection of God that flows from the identity-defining connection to God. A Christian's purpose is found, first and foremost, in the reflection of the image of God.

Glory

In the perfect image of God, image and glory are together as God intended. Hebrews 1:3 states that Jesus is "the radiance of the glory of God." It has been established that Jesus is the model and destiny for humanity created in the image of God. In Jesus, God's intentions for humanity become a glorious reality. Due to the image of God's identity-defining reconnection to God as a result of our union with Christ, we share in Jesus' glory. 1 John 3:2, addresses human destiny and the image of God: "When he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is." Romans 8:29-30 takes this a step further addressing human destiny as God's image: "for those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he

206. Beale and Kim, *God Dwells among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth*, 93-94.

also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified." The word “glorified” is a picture of human destiny as those being renewed in the image of Christ. Paul writes these words to encourage believers with the truth that God intends “to bring to glory every person who is been justified by faith in Jesus Christ."[207] Harrison points out that it is a wonder that this final verb is stated as if the glorification has already happened.[208] All of this seems to be great encouragement for those struggling with doubt in regards to the image’s glorious destiny in Christ. The reality is that a much closer connection to Jesus and his glory lead to a much greater reflection of Jesus and his glory. Image and glory are closely associated in humankind because of Jesus. Lints sums this up: "those who know Jesus shine with the glory greater than Moses ever had.”[209]

In all of this, it is important to make a distinction between God's intention and current reality. God's intention is that the image of God fully shares in Jesus' glory. The reality, however, is that humans are in route to this destination through the sanctification process.[210] As 2 Corinthians 3:18 points out, people lose and gain glory through sanctification. We don't reach this destination, which is God's intention for us, until we reach the life to come. Until then, we are transformed from one degree of glory to another on the way to the full glory of Jesus Christ, the perfect image of God.

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207. Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 536.

208. Harrison et al., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 11, chap. 8, vs. 30, Kindle.

209. Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its Inversion*, 121.

210. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*, 92.

The key is to distinguish between the intended likeness of the image of God and actual likeness of the image of God.[211] God's people are on their way to this glorious destiny which concludes with full conformity into the perfect image of God. However, this glorious destiny is still a future destination for the image of God on earth. We are being conformed into his likeness more and more every day on the way to our destiny, but we have not yet arrived. Because of our identity-defining connection with God in Christ, we are already being conformed into his image. Meaning, we have a purpose-determining reflection of God that is becoming clearer and brighter every day, but we have not yet arrived at the destination of full conformity to the image of God in Christ. Ladd rightly points out that while God's kingdom has arrived with the presence of Jesus on this earth, the full realization of the arrival of God's kingdom is yet to come: "The Word of God does say that the Kingdom of God is a present spiritual reality…At the same time, the Kingdom is an inheritance which God will bestow upon His people when Christ comes in glory."[212] A few paragraphs later Ladd adds that the future coming kingdom "will be attended with great glory."[213]

Richard Lints writes," all humanity bears Adam's image, in the resurrection Jesus's people will bear his image."[214] Paul explicitly references this progressive, continual transformation in 2 Corinthians 3:18: "and we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another." The phrase "being transformed" clearly indicates two truths about this sanctification process. First, it

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211. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 131.

212. George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God (*Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 16-17.

213. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 17.

214. Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its Inversion*, 123.

is a continual, progressive change which is ongoing. Second, Paul uses a passive verb indicating that someone else is doing the transforming, namely God. God is the change agent and we are the responders. The resurrection of the body is the final step in this transformation process into the image of God.[215] At this time, the image of God will be completely formed in us and God's intentions for humanity will be fulfilled.[216] The end result is the image's glorification. Paul writes about this in Romans 8:29-30 as the end of the line of God's renewal process including God's predestining, calling, justifying and glorifying of his people. Gardoski writes about this glorification in Romans 8:29-30, "the goal of our salvation is glory: glorification marks the completion of our salvation and complete salvation means full and final conformity to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ...In that day we will finally be what God intends us to be."[217] God's people will be completely transformed into the image of God and this is part of that full expression of the kingdom (Romans 8:30).

2 Corinthians 3:18 reveals the pathway to this transformation; it is a concise summary of how we go about getting to this glorious destination. The first step is seeing and the second step is the reflecting. Paul writes, "and we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another." Jesus reveals what a full reflection of God looks like. We can look to Genesis 1 and 2 to discover something about the image of God, however, that information is incomplete. More than anything, we can learn how not to live out the image of God by studying the first few chapters of Genesis. Furthermore, Israel provides a clear picture of how not to live out God's image due to their failure. Both Adam

215. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*, 268.

216. Beale and Kim, *God Dwells among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth*, 54.

217. Gardoski, "The Imago Dei Revisited," 36.

and Israel point forward to the perfect image of God who is the only one who can reveal what being in God's image is intended to look like. What was hazy regarding the image of God in the Old Testament becomes crystal clear in the New Testament. As we turn to Jesus to behold the image of God in all his glory, the transformation and thus the reflection of his image begin. Paul informs us that as we behold the perfect image of God in all his glory, we "are being transformed into the same image." As we look to him, we increase in our reflection of him. Paul's statement, "from one degree of glory to another," indicates that different people are at different stages in this process of transformation. Some of God's people reflect more of his glory than others.[218] However, what is clear from scripture is that the people of God are moving towards a full, complete, unified reflection of the image of God in Christ. Our destiny is a corporate destiny. This purpose determining reflection of God is the primary reason we exist on this earth.

Conclusion to Chapter 2

Human identity as the image of God addresses the three big questions of individuation which emerging generations are attempting to answer. The identity question (Who am I?) is first answered through Adam and Eve's utterly dependent connection with the living God and later on in an ever-deepening connection to God through the perfect image of God. Connection is the primary determinant of human identity because what we connect ourselves to teleologically is what determines our identity as we become what we worship.[219] The question of autonomy (Why am I here?) is first answered through the resulting reflection that flows out of Adam and Eve's primal connection with God and later on the ever-increasing reflection of God which comes

218. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*, 248-249.

219. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 248-249.

about as a result of the ever-deepening connection with God through Jesus. Human purpose follows human identity which is determined by whatever men and women choose to worship. Lastly, the question of autonomy (Where do I belong?) is also answered by the image of God as the image of God is both the identity of the individual Christian and the identity of the communal people of God. Not only were Adam and Eve created as the image of God in community, through Jesus, God's people are also called to live out this identity in community. The same is true for emerging generations, and ultimately the entire Christian church today. We belong to both God and his people and it is in these relationships that the image of God is both lived out and realized through an identity-defining connection to God and a purpose-defining reflection of God.

This chapter began with an examination of the power of stories to form identity and concluded that the ultimate story of God and his kingdom should be the story forming the identity of the people of God. Next was a brief overview of the most popular evangelical theologies of the imago Dei which revealed that most theologies of the image tend to focus on ways that people are like instead of questions regarding human meaning and God's intentions for humanity. The majority of the chapter was then devoted to understanding identity formation within the context of God's three act kingdom story: creation in the image of God, the subversion of the image of God and the subsequent perversion of human identity, and re-creation in the image of God. It is only because of Jesus as our model, our enabler, and our destiny that we can live out God's intentions for us as his image through an identity-defining connection of God resulting in a purpose-determining reflection of God. The image of God is the goal of our transformation in the Christian life. The next chapter is a literature review of the "how" of

Christian formation into the image of God. The goal for Christians is Jesus, the image of God. The question now is “How do Christians reach that goal?”

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter begins with some introductory thoughts on Christian formation. After this, we will take a brief look at three models of Christian formation, after which we will then take an in-depth look at one of those models, the "Person as a Lover" model. This in-depth look begins with a theoretical analysis of the model relying heavily on James K. Smith's books "Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview and Cultural Formation" and "You are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit." After this theoretical look at the "Person as a Lover" model, the model is practically analyzed laying out five action steps which Christians must take if they want to experience all this model has to offer. This section on the practical analysis of the model is fairly extensive as we dive into the practices of both the communal weekly worship service and the practices of daily worship.

Before we turn to a brief look at three distinct models of Christian formation, a few introductory thoughts will be addressed.

People of the Goal

From the latter part of the 20th century until present day, evangelical Christianity largely focused on the message that individuals, through Jesus, can enter into a personal relationship with God and spend eternity with him in heaven. This message has been faithfully preached in evangelistic gatherings, church services, youth gatherings, and children's church. This message is an incomplete message as it leaves out the reality of God's ultimate goal for the world and his ultimate goal for his people. God's ultimate goal for the world is the irruption of his kingdom and his ultimate goal for his people is their transformation into his image so that they can connect to him and then reflect him to the world, partnering with him in bringing about his kingdom. This is

the end goal and Christians must live as people of this goal. As God's kingdom irrupts into this world and as his image is progressively formed in us, we become ourselves, the selves that God originally intended us to be at creation. This is the Christians identity, both individually and corporately. However, this takes transformation. While God's work of transformation is very much the primary work, we also have a job to do. When the message of God's kingdom and God's image is not communicated, Christians fail to see the big picture and understand God's goal for the world and for his people and our role in that work. The completed goal of the Christian journey is the fullness of God's kingdom and our complete transformation into the image of God. To fail to understand that this goal is to wander aimlessly on the Christian journey. However, once we understand God's goal for the world and for his people and then embrace that goal as our own, we know what is most important in life and we know how we must structure and aim our lives. Once you know the end goal of the journey, you can begin mapping out how you are going to get there. That is what this chapter is all about: discovering how we live under God's rule in his irrupting kingdom and submitting to his transformation of us into our true identity as the image of God.

NT Wright, in his book "After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters," writes about the rich young ruler in Matthew 19, Mark 10 and Luke 18. He points out that when this man asked the question "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" he was not asking about going to heaven. Rather he was asking about the coming kingdom of God and his identity in that kingdom. "The man is essentially asking Jesus, what sort of person must I be in the present if I'm going to be part of the New Age and God's kingdom? How can that future reality shape who I am becoming right now?" Jesus's response to "follow me!" is both what Christians should do and

how Christians should do it to become the people he is calling us to be.[1] All of this leads to a transformation where Christians become genuine human beings in the image of God who connect with him and reflect him. This transformation is not about following rules, rather it is about living in God's kingdom and under his kingdom rule and being transformed into God's image so much so that it becomes our identity; the habits and behaviors of God's ultimate image, Jesus Christ, become second nature to us. Thus, we must become "people of the goal" where the goal of the imago Dei shapes the habits of our daily lives which ultimately ends with the finished product of the image of God.[2]

Three Problematic Issues

Before we delve into the how of this "people of the goal" transformation, it is important to address three problematic issues which the church faces when it comes to this kind of holistic, life – transforming discipleship.

The first problematic issue is the common views of discipleship in the western world. Churches tend towards two extremes when it comes to their practical theology of discipleship. The first view implies that we can experience transformation into the image of God without any kind of training whatsoever. Stanley Hauerwas sums this up concisely: "we have underwritten a voluntaristic conception of the Christian faith which presupposes that one can become a Christian without training."[3] More often than not, this comes sfrom Christian traditions which

1. N. T. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 14.

2. Wright, *After You Believe*, 14.

3. Stanley Hauerwas, "Discipleship as a Craft, Church as a Disciplined Community," *The Christian Century*108, no. 27 (October 02, 1991): 882, accessed November 19, 2018, http://proxy.gordonconwell.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0000842956&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

primarily focus on going to heaven through "accepting" Jesus as your personal savior. In these churches, the focus is on this "gospel" message with minimal to no focus on what it takes to grow into the imago Dei. Christian traditions which focus solely on head knowledge of the Bible and theology also tend to fall into this category. When the goal of discipleship is gaining more information about God and the result is an intellectualized "spiritual" transformation, wholistic discipleship involving transformation into the image of God is an unintentional casualty.

The next view of discipleship comes from Christian traditions which tend towards a legalistic interpretation of scripture. Churches in this tradition measure personal and spiritual growth against the ruler of certain cherished legalistic behaviors which may or may not be biblical. While this type of discipleship may initially appear convincing, in the long run, the rotting fruit of legalism eventually rears its ugly head. Temporary behavioral shifts built upon the foundation of manmade rules does not equal lasting biblical transformation into the image of God.

The second problematic issue is the common Christian understanding of weekly worship. Culturally, there are two significant problems the church faces when it comes to discipleship. The first one is that of the entertainment culture. Churches influenced by this culture, and there are many in the United States, unconsciously teach their congregants that worship is both a personal experience of God and a personal expression of their worship to God. At the center of this experience and expression is the autonomous self. This is subtly reinforced through the format of the church service, which is structured and carried out much like a musical concert. In this concert format, worship, defined as the singing part of the service, is evaluated primarily on the quality of music and the depth of emotional response the music generated in the individuals

present at the service.[4] Congregants often leave the church service saying "Worship was great today!" if they enjoyed the music and felt emotionally moved. Sermons reinforce this anthropocentric culture with titles like "5 Steps to a Better Marriage," "How to Thrive at Work," and "Live Your Best Life Now." The primary goal of the sermon is to engage listeners with relevant and humorous content. The Bible is quoted, but more often than not it is quoted in utilitarian fashion. Unfortunately, this approach tends to highlight the gifts and personality of the preacher as opposed to the God who created us in His image. Furthermore, it removes God from the center of worship and puts the autonomous self on the throne of life. This just reinforces what many Americans already believe to be true: God is all about me and my happiness.[5]

All of this does not stop with the main church services. This same approach is used in both the children's and youth ministries. This way of doing church reinforces the consumerism that drives American culture and is so prevalent in Christian churches. The unspoken question for most attendees is "What do I get out of it?" God is unintentionally removed from the center of weekly worship and all we are left with is the individual's experience and the individual's emotional expression of "worship."[6] In these churches, formation into the image of God is an afterthought, at best, and completely absent, at worst.

The third problematic issue churches face when it comes to this kind of "people of the goal" discipleship is the American understanding of the "real" self. David Brooks in his brilliant

4. H. Wayne Johnson, "Practicing Theology on a Sunday Morning : Corporate Worship as Spiritual Formation," *Trinity Journal Spring 2010*, April 01, 2010, 33-34, accessed November 19, 2018, http://proxy.gordonconwell.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=33h&AN=33h-08523919-225A8161&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

5. Christian Smith's book and his discover of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is helpful for forming a deeper understanding of this.

6. Johnson, "Practicing Theology on a Sunday Morning : Corporate Worship as Spiritual Formation," 39.

book “The Road to Character,” points out that we are taught from a young age that the real self is the self that is stripped of all society’s demands and expectations. This real self is found through freeing oneself from the external constraints and expectations so that one can live freely, act freely, speak freely and ultimately be one’s true self. Brooks points out that this understanding of the true self came about due to the shift from moral realism to moral romanticism. While moral realism placed a tremendous emphasis on human sin and weakness, moral romanticism emphasizes humanity’s innate goodness. Romanticism’s optimistic view of human nature and its conclusion that the primary problem of people is they don’t love themselves enough is what leads to this view of the real self.[7] Our moral authority and our model for identity is no longer found externally, it is found in each individual’s unique and real self. Therefore, in order to grow into our true identity, we must look into ourselves. As we have discovered, this is disastrous, and ultimately tragic. God has created humans in his image and thus Christian formation is about fixing our eyes on Jesus, the ultimate image of God, and becoming our true selves through the cultivation of the image of God. Our identity is not found internally; it is found externally because it is found in Jesus himself. He is the ultimate image of God and he is our true self, who we were created to be.

Growing in Grace

As seen above, 2 Corinthians 3:18 tells us that we are in the process of being transformed into the image of Christ. In Romans 12:2, Paul tells us not to be conformed to the world, but to be transformed by God. The passive nature of the verb “transformed” indicates that it is not us but God who does the transforming. We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ;

7. David Brooks, *The Road to Character* (New York: Random House, 2016), 243, 245-246.

likewise, we are transformed by grace. If we left this theological reality here, it seems to indicate that we take little to no role in our transformational process. However, passages like 1 Timothy 4:7 and Hebrews 12:14 support Hauerwas' statement that Christlikeness in God's people "is not automatic but must be acquired and cultivated."[8] In 1 Timothy, Paul commands Timothy to "train" himself for godliness. Hebrews 12 commands Christians to "strive" for holiness. Both of these passages clearly point out that we play a role in pursuing our certain future of those completely transformed into the imago Dei. So, though both our salvation and our sanctification are gifts of God's grace, we must put ourselves in a receptive place to receive this grace. This is where our training and striving enters the picture. Wright points out that the fruit of the spirit does not grow automatically: "they do not suddenly appear because someone has believed in Jesus, has prayed for God's Spirit ,and then sat back and waited for 'fruit to arrive'… Christian virtue…is both the gift of God *and* the result of the person of faith making conscious decisions to cultivate this way of life…"[9] Rhodes' analogy of an antenna and radio waves is helpful here. The formative practices of the Christian's training "enable us to raise the antenna so that we can receive the radio waves of the Spirit's transforming power. Like radio waves, such transforming power is always in the air, always available to those in Christ and formative practices put us in the way of that power by inviting us into postures of receptivity."[10] Our growth in grace is hard

8. Stanley Hauerwas, "Toward an Ethics of Character," *Theological Studies* 33, no. 4 (December 1972): 699, accessed November 19, 2018, http://proxy.gordonconwell.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0000737699&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

9. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters*, 195, 197.

10. Michael Rhodes, "Forward Unto Virtue": Formative Practices and I Corinthians 11:17-34," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 11, no. 1 (2017): 125, accessed November 19, 2018, http://proxy.gordonconwell.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLAiG0V170613000115&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

work, but it is also necessary and fulfilling work because we are becoming, in the present, the people God has intended and destined us to be.[11]

Three Models of Christian Formation

This next section addresses the practical reality of how Christian professors, teachers, pastors, and leaders can create an environment for Christian formation so as to be people of the goal. Smith proposes that behind every pedagogy is a philosophical anthropology.[12] Essentially, underlying every method of teaching is a specific understanding of humanity; how we teach is rooted in what we believe about the kind of creatures which constitute humanity.[13] The following section will look at three potential models of Christian formation.

Model 1—Person as Thinker: Knowing Things

The first model of Christian education is, by far, the predominant model implemented in churches throughout the United States. Rene Descartes famous statement "I think, therefore I am" sums up this view perfectly as this model is a result of Cartesian rationalism due to its prioritization of humanity's cognitive abilities.[14] Because humans are primarily thinking things, education is primarily about imparting information. Related specifically to Christian formation,

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11. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters*, 139.

12. James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2011), 27.

13. Charles E. Faroe, "In Pursuit of a Holistic Christian Pedagogy: Affectivity in James K. A. Smith's Desiring the Kingdom," *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 13, no. 3 (May 2013): 12, accessed November 19, 2018, http://proxy.gordonconwell.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0001940599&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

14. Stephen Richard Turley, "Practicing the Kingdom : A Critical Appraisal of James K. A. Smith's Desiring the Kingdom," *Calvin Theological Journal Apr 2013*, April 01, 2013, 135, accessed November 19, 2018, http://proxy.gordonconwell.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=33h&AN=33h-14B87CC7-88BE277F&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

this model fosters an intellectualist account of what it means to be a Christian.[15] Therefore, the essence of Christianity is defined by a summary of doctrines one must intellectually interact with and cognitively integrate. This intellectual knowledge of these doctrines results in our transformation into the image of God. As stated earlier, this model of Christian formation is the predominant model in American churches. It is also the predominant model in American schools and universities. The idea is simple: the more we know, the more we grow. If we desire to be transformed into the image of God, we keep our eyes on Jesus by learning more about him. The key is knowledge and the cognitive integration of that knowledge as knowledge is what God uses to transform us into his image. In light of this, discipleship will focus on the changing and imparting of knowledge.

While it is outside the scope of this current study to provide an in-depth analysis of this model, it is important to note a few of its significant shortcomings. While this view places a premium on the human mind, it relies on an anthropology "that owes more to modernity and the Enlightenment than it does to the holistic, biblical vision of human persons."[16] James Smith, whose model of Christian formation we will turn to shortly, rightly points out that this overly intellectualist anthropology leaves very little room for the human body and human affect.[17]

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15. Jonathan T. Pennington, "Reading the Gospels Smithly: Thinking upon and Loving the Gospels in Dialogue with James K.A. Smith's Desiring the Kingdom and Imagining the Kingdom," *Southeastern Theological Review* 6, no. 1 (2015): 49, accessed November 19, 2018, http://proxy.gordonconwell.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLAn3850491&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

16. Faroe, "In Pursuit of a Holistic Christian Pedagogy: Affectivity in James K. A. Smith's Desiring the Kingdom," 16.

17. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation,* 44.

Regarding the shortsightedness of this view. Swinton writes: “Real affective apprehension of the divine must take place at a much deeper level than our personal comprehension.”[18]

Model 2—Person as Believer: Believing Animals

While the first view proposes that human beings are thinking things, the second view assumes that human beings are first and foremost believing animals. This view takes the conversation a level or two deeper, focusing on beliefs and assumptions instead of thoughts. Thus, instead of a thinking primordial orientation to the world, this view proposes that humanity’s primordial orientation to the world is belief. Those who hold to this view point out that belief in humanity precedes thinking and thus it is vital to acknowledge how much human thinking operates on the basis of faith.[19] Essentially, before we are thinkers, we are believers. Smith sums up this view succinctly “What defines us is not what we think—not the set of ideas we assent to—but rather what we believe, the commitments and trusts that orient our being-in-the-world.”[20] Since beliefs are what God uses to transform us, discipleship focuses on changing our beliefs and instilling new beliefs.

One positive aspect of this view is that it challenges the predominant thinking model moving the discussion away from thoughts to beliefs and assumptions. Smith applauds this view’s response to reductionistic rationalism by pushing back on the overly intellectual approach of the first model.[21] However, he points out two reservations about this philosophical

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18. John Swinton, "Restoring the Image: Spirituality, Faith, and Cognitive Disability," *Journal of Religion and Health* 36, no. 1 (1997): 23, accessed November 19, 2018, http://proxy.gordonconwell.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=jph&AN=IJP0000076795&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

19. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation,* 43.

20. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom,* 43.

21. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom,* 44.

anthropology. First, it only moves the clash of ideas down one level, from thoughts to beliefs. Additionally, Smith points out that the beliefs and assumptions of the believing animals pedagogy are not all that different from the thoughts of the thinking things pedagogy.[22] The second reservation is similar: the model is reductionistic in nature, built upon the foundation of a disembodied, individualistic picture of the human person. Like the person-as-thinker model, our orienting beliefs are mostly disconnected from what we do and they have very little to no attachment to the people around us.[23] Hauerwas sums this reservation up concisely: "Christianity is not about beliefs in God plus behavior…To become a disciple is…to become part of a different community with a different set of practices.[24]

Model 3—Person as Lover: Desiring Animals

In this view, formation is not first and foremost about what we know or believe, but about what we love; it assumes that our most basic orientation to the world is affective. In this model it is not information that forms knowledge, it is desire. At the most foundational level, "I am what I love."[25] There is an assumption here that we love before we know or believe. Thus, our fundamental mode of engaging the world is love and desire and it is out of this fundamental understanding that we come to know.[26] Humans are much more than what they think, rather they are defined by what they love.[27] Desire precedes thinking and thus both our thoughts and our

22. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom,* 44.

23. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom,* 45.

24. Hauerwas, "Discipleship as a Craft, Church as a Disciplined Community," *108.*

25. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation, 18,* 46.

26. James Barry Lawson, "Theological Formation in the Church of 'the Last Men and Women'," *Ecclesiology* 9, no. 3 (2013): 336, accessed November 19, 2018, doi:10.1163/17455316-00903005.

27. Faroe, "In Pursuit of a Holistic Christian Pedagogy: Affectivity in James K. A. Smith's Desiring the Kingdom," 12.

beliefs flow from our desires. This shifts the center of gravity of human identity away from the head and mind towards the human heart.[28] Since our ultimate desires are what God uses to transform us into his image, this model of discipleship focuses on changing our desires by giving us newer and better desires through the habit-forming influence of Biblical liturgies.

The analogy of skill development can be helpful here. Becoming a better golfer requires more than just reading a book about golf. Reading Jack Nicklaus' book, *Golf My Way: The Instructional Classic*, may help on your journey to improving your golf game, but it will take much more than that. Transformation of one's golf game involves more than just the transmission of head knowledge, it involves the cultivation of a skillset, or specific habits, that eventually become second nature. According to the Person as Lover model, the same is true for the cultivation of the image of God in God's people. The development of habits is absolutely essential for transformation into the image of God because habits are what direct our desires towards the telos that is Jesus and his kingdom.[29]

There are two elements of this model which make it so unique: it's understanding of the human body and the emphasis on the social nature of human formation. First, this affective anthropology emphasizes the power of bodily practices to shape and form our desires.[30] This formation of desire happens as our bodies train our hearts through liturgies. "Liturgies aim our love to different ends precisely by training our hearts through our bodies.[31] This concept will be

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28. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation,* 47.

29. Scott Aniol, "Practice Makes Perfect: Corporate Worship and the Formation of Spiritual Virtue," *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care*, 96-97.

30. Turley, "Practicing the Kingdom: A Critical Appraisal of James K. A. Smith's Desiring the Kingdom," 132.

31. Lawson, "Theological Formation in the Church of 'the Last Men and Women,'" 337.

worked out in detail in the next section. This view's emphasis on the social nature of human formation is seen in the cultural liturgies which shape our desires. Our desires, or loves, are shaped through the community and its communal rituals. Formation does not happen individually, rather it is a social activity supporting Hauerwas' statement that "salvation is genuinely social."[32]

The most common critique of this view is that it is "an imbalanced reaction" to the predominant model of the person as thinker and thus the pendulum swings too far the other way completely dismissing the role of cognition in the Christian's formation.[33] Faroe proposes that there is an overemphasis on the restoration of embodiment and affectivity as opposed to honoring the interrelated nature of thoughts, beliefs and desires in the human existence.[34] Smith counters this critique by pointing out that it is not an imbalanced reaction but rather a shifting of the primary focus away from the rational and cognitive and onto desire and love. Cognition still plays a role, but it is no longer in the driver's seat when it comes to formation.

We will now take a more detailed theoretical look at the Person as Lover view.

A Theoretical Look at the "Person as Lover" Model of Christian Formation

Introduction to the Theoretical Look at the "Person as Lover" Model

For us, the ultimate question underlying this view, and all other views, is the question "How do Christians experience transformation into the image of God?" Zanhiser insightfully

32. Hauerwas, "Discipleship as a Craft, Church as a Disciplined Community," 108, 882.

33. Pennington, "Reading the Gospels Smithly: Thinking upon and Loving the Gospels in Dialogue with James K.A. Smith's Desiring the Kingdom and Imagining the Kingdom," 6, 58.

34. Faroe, "In Pursuit of a Holistic Christian Pedagogy: Affectivity in James K. A. Smith's Desiring the Kingdom," 13, 16-17.

points out that making converts to Christianity is much easier than taking the next step in the formation of these converts into the image of God. Formation into the image of God involves initiation into a new reality that is less of a one-time event and more of a series of multiple initiations resulting in progressive formation.[35] "The Person as Lover" model takes this into account acknowledging a process that is much more complicated than just the acquisition of Christian information.

Smith lays out four key elements in his affective anthropology: ultimate desires, a telos, habits of the heart, and cultural liturgies. This study will add a fifth key element of identity. Furthermore, Smith orders these key features starting with the ultimate desires which act as love's aim. The current study will start with cultural liturgies as it is in the context of community and under the influence of community in which ultimate desires are formed. Due to the powerful nature of community in this model of identity formation, it makes more sense to start with the communal liturgies and move forward from there. This will become more evident as we walk through this model. Refer to Figure 1 for an overview of this model.

Element 1 of Person as Lover Model —Cultural Liturgies: Love's Formation

This study starts with the powerful influence of communal practices, called cultural liturgies. Cultural liturgies are communal practices, which are repetitive, shaped by a telos and its corresponding narrative, and formative for identity. This definition contains five aspects which must be broken down and analyzed to better understand both the impact and power of these liturgies in the daily life of human beings. It is important to keep in mind that these cultural liturgies take many forms. The focus of this study is primarily on the influence of Christian

35. Zahniser, *Symbol and Ceremony: Making Disciples across Cultures*, 22.

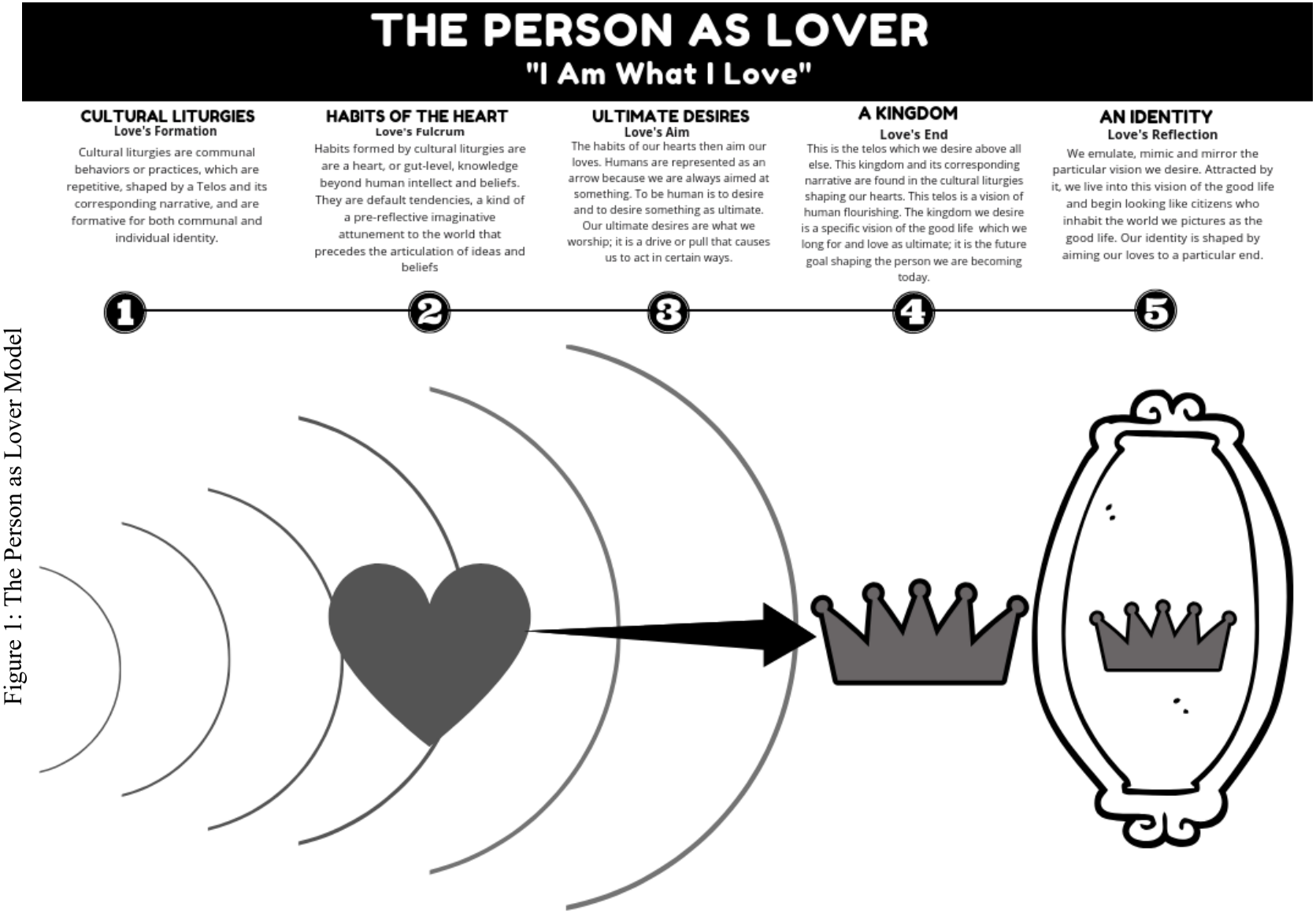

Figure 1: The Person as Lover Model

liturgies in the formation of the image of God. However, secular liturgies will be addressed throughout the study as necessary.

The first aspect is that cultural liturgies are behaviors, works or practices. For the Christian, these liturgies are Christian behaviors, works or practices. Craig Dykstra insightfully calls the Christian life "The practice of many practices."[36] The essence of Christian cultural liturgies is that they are works or behaviors that Christians perform resulting in a new kind of life in which Christians do not become "better," rather they become "Christian."[37] This growth, or spiritual formation, is a direct result of Christian liturgies that form all aspects of a Christian's life into the image of Christ, resulting in an ever – deepening connection with God and in ever – increasing reflection of God.[38]

The western world in which we live has a bent towards perceiving life in two spheres – the physical and spiritual, the secular and sacred. Thomas Howard, a former protestant who converted to Catholicism primarily due to its emphasis on liturgy, points out that our western way of thinking implies that there is a secular life which dominates most of our daily hours and is distinct from a few sacred, or spiritual, moments when we pray or worship.[39] While this dualism can be traced back to the classical Greek mind/body dichotomy, 21st century America, and more specifically the 21st century American church, has taken this dualism to a whole new

36. Craig Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices* (Westminster: Knox, 2005), 67.

37. William H. Willimon, Stanley Hauerwas, and Scott C. Saye, *Lord, Teach Us: the Lord's Prayer & the Christian Life* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 20.

38. Kyle David Bennett, *Practices of Love: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life of the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2017), 25.

39. Thomas Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough: Worship of God in Liturgy and Sacrament* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 31.

level driving a wedge firmly between the physical and spiritual. The result is a Christian faith which is distinctly separated from the body and thus relegates the human body to the physical realm while the Christian faith is consigned to a disembodied, spiritual realm.[40] This spiritual/physical dualism is evident in western Christianity especially when the Christian faith is pitted against Christian practices and where faith is understood to be lived out in some ethereal realm which is solely spiritual and does not include bodily practices.[41] However, this is simply not true; a life of faith involves the entirety of who we are as human beings created in God's image. As Christians, we must renounce the divided world where the physical is opposed to the spiritual because cultural liturgies use the physical body in forming us.[42]

While cultural liturgies are informed by an embedded telos and its corresponding narrative, they are ultimately what people do bodily.[43] When it comes to cultural liturgies, bodily actions are important because humans are embodied persons. We are not persons apart from our bodies and our Christian faith is not a faith apart from our bodies. We know this, first and foremost, because God came to us in a body.[44] The incarnation reveals to us the importance of our physical bodies when it comes to the life of faith.[45] Christian life is praxis which involves our

40. Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough*, 39.

41. Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough*, 83. Howard concludes that this was a negative result of the Reformation.

42. Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough*, 104.

43. Aniol, "Practice Makes Perfect: Corporate Worship and the Formation of Spiritual Virtue," 98-99.

44. Jones and Barbeau, *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age: Explorations in Theological Anthropology*, 169-172.

45. Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough: Worship of God in Liturgy and Sacrament*, 37.

bodies; these practices are the way we learn this new way of life and undergo transformation into the image of God.[46]

The second aspect of the definition of cultural liturgies centers on the communal nature of the behaviors, works and practices. Cultural liturgies are communal behaviors or works; they are social in nature. The communal nature of liturgy can be a difficult concept for the western Christian which builds its personal foundation on the development of the unique, individual self, free from the influence of external constraints. The communal nature of cultural liturgies is supported by social theorists' findings that behavior, character, and ultimately identity are all formed in the social setting. Social practice is the principal location for identity formation.[47] Christian identity is not a result of our personal relationship with God where we accept Jesus into our hearts and then individually pursue him though personal daily Bible study and prayer. Christian identity is first and foremost a group product formed in a social matrix where we are shaped by the social forces of our communities.[48] These theories on socialization and enculturation reveal that the practices of the faith community are the forces most powerful in shaping a person's identity. The community, and thus the individual, take form through common participation in a particular set of practices.[49]

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46. Sofia Cavaletti, Patricia M. Coulter, and Julie M. Coulter, *The Religious Potential of the Child: Experiencing Scripture and Liturgy with Young Children* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1992), 12.

47. Turley, "Practicing the Kingdom: A Critical Appraisal of James K. A. Smith's Desiring the Kingdom," 142.

48. William H. Willimon, *The Service of God: How Worship and Ethics Are Related* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 32.

49. Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices*, 12, 83.

Cultural liturgies are practices which are tethered to and embodied in concrete social institutions. There are no private practices, therefore our hearts and identity are constantly being formed by the cultural institutions we create.[50] However, not all communal behaviors are liturgies. The distinction depends on whether identity formation is occurring at a foundational level. That individual formation takes place within the community is not just a sociological truth, it is also a biblical reality. Proverbs 13:20 tells us that people who walk with the wise become wise, but the one surrounding himself with fools suffers harm. Essentially, we become like the people around us. This is directly due to the influence of the practices of communal cultural liturgies.

The third aspect of these communal works, practices, and behaviors is their repetitive nature. Milliner sums this up perfectly: ""Liturgies are compressed, *repeated*, performed narratives that, over time, enscript us into the story they 'tell' by showing, by performing."[51] The repetitive nature of these practices impresses and reinforces the pattern of the automatic brain thus impacting humans at a foundational level.[52] These practices are so entrenched in culture that they are repeated over and over again, instilling them into communities and ultimately individuals. The cultural liturgies take root in us as we internalize them, often unconsciously, over time through repetition.[53] Due to the ordinary and mundane nature of these practices, it does not feel like formation is occurring. However, this kind of foundational learning takes practice

50. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation,* 71.

51. Jones and Barbeau, *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age: Explorations in Theological Anthropology*, 109. Emphasis mine.

52. Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices*, 12, 59.

53. Willimon, *The Service of God: How Worship and Ethics Are Related*, 105.

and repetition over time.[54] Repetition is necessary for any kind of human transformation.[55] The repetition of these practices is not the end in and of itself; the end goal of these habitual cultural practices is learning a new way of life and ultimately, the formation of our identities.[56]

Regarding the power of repetition, it would be helpful to think about baseball drills, which are a kind of cultural liturgy. In virtually every practice setting, baseball infielders take to the field while a coach, starting with third-base and progressively moving towards first base, hits grounders, line drives, and pop flies to each infielder. This liturgical practice happens repeatedly, on both practice days and game days. This drill is a repetitive practice intended to train the player's body to respond and react in automatic ways based on specific scenarios.[57] As an infielder, there is not much time to think when a ball is hurling towards you at 60 miles per hour. Our default tendencies have to be constantly and repetitively reinforced and this is exactly what infield baseball drills do.[58] We instruct the automatic brain primarily by forcing it to repeat certain actions. As we will see, this is exactly how human desire is aimed.[59] This is why the practices that make up cultural liturgies are key to forming habits that then aim our desire towards the true image of God and his kingdom. This leads directly into the next element of the definition of cultural liturgies: cultural liturgies are shaped by a telos and its corresponding narrative.

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54. Willimon, *The Service of God*, 74.

55. Aniol, "Practice Makes Perfect: Corporate Worship and the Formation of Spiritual Virtue," 98.

56. Aniol, "Practice Makes Perfect," 98.

57. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, 59.

58. David Brooks, "Your Brain on Baseball," The New York Times, March 18, 2007, body, accessed November 26, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/18/opinion/18brooks.html.

59. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, 60.

We live in an age of images and in a culture which claims "image is everything."[60] Milliner calls it an optocracy, were we are ruled by what influences our eyes and our imaginations.[61] Images of the good life are rampant in our culture, seducing us through our phones, tablets, computers and televisions, to which we are tethered for an unreasonable amount of time each day. These images demand our attention and attempt to co-opt our imaginations with the promise of fulfillment through construction of our own image as opposed to our formation into God's image. This self-construction happens through the bodily practices and rituals of consumerism which promise fulfilment through "the consumption of goods, materials and brands."[62] The telos and its narrative of fulfillment through self-construction is embedded in these secular cultural practices.

Embedded in each cultural liturgy is a picture of the good life. Every liturgy "is an education, and embedded in every liturgy is an implicit understanding of the world."[63] "One of the things that liturgies do is to visibly narrate a story about what really matters."[64] More often than not, people are blind to the telos embedded in specific cultural practices. Regardless, these cultural liturgies are intentional in nature; the stories, or narratives, a community tells orients the members of that community toward a particular and specific vision of the good life. Through these telos-embedded liturgical practices, we learn to live a specific way of life.[65] Thus, these

60. Jones and Barbeau, *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age: Explorations in Theological Anthropology*, 11.

61. Jones and Barbeau, *The Image of God*, 108.

62. Jones and Barbeau, *The Image of God*, 98.

63. Lawson, "Theological Formation in the Church of 'the Last Men and Women," 337.

64. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation,* 109.

65. David Smith and James K. A. Smith, eds., *Teaching and Christian Practices: Reshaping Faith and Learning* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2011), 85.

cultural liturgies have the power to co-opt the Christian's imagination and point hearts towards the direction of a lesser telos.

Christian liturgies differ from secular liturgies in that Christian practices have an embedded telos and corresponding story that are different.[66] Christian liturgies will thus capture the Christian imagination, pointing our hearts and minds to God's kingdom story and the ultimate image of God, Jesus Christ. As Christian liturgies take root in our lives through specific communal Christian practices, our imaginations will be increasingly captured by the irrupting kingdom of God and the first true human being and image-bearer in human history, in whose image we are being formed.[67] In fact, telos literally means "end" and the Christian telos tells us what in the end we are supposed to be: people who are completely transformed into the image of God, living under the marvelous rule of God.[68] In this case, the Bible is seen primarily not as a book containing Christian instructions for life but rather a book revealing humanity's telos as found in the story of God, both which have the power to expand our kingdom imagination and lead us into a kingdom way of life through telos-laden practices.[69]

This naturally leads to the fifth and last aspect of the definition of cultural liturgies: cultural liturgies are formative for both communal and individual identity. Simply put, liturgies form people's identity at the most foundational level. Stanley Hauerwas captures this truth specifically: "our actions not only affirm who we have been a but also determine what we will be

66. Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices*, 76.

67. Jones and Barbeau, *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age: Explorations in Theological Anthropology*, 240.

68. Willimon, *The Service of God: How Worship and Ethics Are Related*, 64.

69. Jones and Barbeau, *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age: Explorations in Theological Anthropology*, 205.

in the future."[70] Oftentimes, we are unaware that formation is taking place therefore it does not always feel like formation. It is about the ordinary and mundane, about habit and repetition and learning over time. Cultural liturgies are not about human expression; humans do not perform these liturgies to express their faith or their devotion to God. In fact, it is very much the opposite. These cultural liturgies are transformative in nature as they enlist humans in performing repeated behaviors or works and the end result is identity formation.[71]

If we want to be people of the goal, we must keep in mind that spontaneity can be the enemy of liturgy. The American culture has a fascination with spontaneity. It is often assumed that spontaneity equals authenticity. Spontaneous acts are generally not seen as authentic acts. For example, if a person is driving home from work and has a spontaneous feeling to stop by a flower store to bring flowers to his significant other, this is defined as an authentic act. However, this label of authentic does not usually apply to scheduled habits. If a person schedules the habit of buying his significant other flowers every Tuesday, this is often seen as a behavior lacking authenticity. Much of this is due to the fact that this is not a "spontaneous" act of love. Christians often approach their life with God in the same way. "I can't just do these liturgical practices. I have to wait until I feel like it" is a common excuse among American Christians.[72] However, according to the "Person as Lover" model, this is faulty thinking. If we want to experience transformation into the image of God, we must be intentionally liturgical because liturgy is what God uses to bring about our transformation into his image. If we wait to start practicing Biblical liturgies until we feel like it, not only is our view of worship errant, we will wait a long time

70. Hauerwas, "Toward an Ethics of Character," 699.

71. Rhodes, "Forward Unto Virtue: Formative Practices and I Corinthians 11:17-34," 120.

72. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters*, 224.

because our desires ultimately change through our immersion in Christian liturgies. This is because these liturgies form our heart habits which then aim our desires in the direction of Jesus and his kingdom. Simply put, our desires for Jesus, the image of God, will increase primarily through the power of Christian liturgies practiced *coram Deo,* before the face of God.[73]

One last important point regarding liturgies is the difference between thin and thick practices. Smith distinguishes between the two and the main difference has to do with formative versus nonformative practices. Thin practices are those repeated liturgies that are communal in nature but fail to form us at the most foundational level of identity. An example of this would be washing one's hair every day. Hair washing is a repetitive behavior but it does not carry an embedded telos nor is it formative for identity. It may be formative for good hygiene but it does not form humans at the most foundational level of identity. Thick practices are those cultural liturgies which are shaped by a telos and its corresponding narrative and are formative for identity by aiming our desires.

Element 2 of Person as Lover Model—Habits of the Heart: Love's Fulcrum

The second aspect of this model of formation is the habits of the heart. This element is about knowledge however, it is much more than mere intellectual comprehension. The western church tends to take a cognitive and cerebral approach to discipleship. More often than not, discipleship emphasizes the acquisition of cognitive information from the Bible.[74] Practically, this manifests itself in the encouragement of an individual quiet time with God each day with the goal of obtaining biblical knowledge. It is implied that biblical knowledge alone will lead to our

73. Rhodes, "Forward Unto Virtue: Formative Practices and I Corinthians 11:17-34," 11, 125.

74. Zahniser, *Symbol and Ceremony: Making Disciples across Cultures*, ix.

transformation into the image of God. However, the acquisition of cognitive knowledge is not enough. Cognitive knowledge alone often results in "an arid and sterile knowledge" which generally does not infiltrate the individual's life.[75] There is a more powerful knowledge: a heart knowledge which develops in response to the repetitive liturgies in which we are immersed. This kind of true Christian knowledge comes only in the context of Christian practices.[76] The power of this primal knowledge over cognitive knowledge is supported by Aristotle, who wrote: "For it is impossible, or not easy, to alter by argument what has long been absorbed by habit.[77]

Whereas some people call this primal heart knowledge "virtues," Smith uses the phrase "habits of the heart," proposing that these habits are the fulcrum of our desire because they are the hinge that turns our heart in such a way that it is predisposed to be aimed in certain directions. The word habit can be confusing here. According to this model, habits are learned dispositions to act in specific ways and to value specific things; they are precognitive tendencies to act in certain ways towards certain ends.[78] More often than not, the formation of these habits takes place without the conscious awareness of the participants. These heart habits are shaped through cultural liturgies and as a result, the habits become second nature behavior, or default tendencies, which are deeply engrained in us.[79] This is where the "Person as Lover" model parts ways with the "Person as Thinker" and the "Person as Believer" model. Habits formed by cultural liturgies are not intellectual knowledge or a belief system; they are a heart, or gut-level,

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75. Cavaletti, Coulter, and Coulter, *The Religious Potential of the Child: Experiencing Scripture and Liturgy with Young Children*, 74.

76. Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices*, 144.

77. Aristoteles, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1995), 292.

78. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation,* 56.

79. Rhodes, "Forward Unto Virtue: Formative Practices and I Corinthians 11:17-34," 11, 121.

knowledge that is beyond human intellect, beliefs and assumptions. It is a heart – level shaping of the individual that happens over long periods of time.[80] The habits are what Smith calls a "pre-reflective imaginative attunement to the world" which precedes the articulation of ideas and beliefs.[81] Sophia calls the process of gaining this heart knowledge "affective ratification" which happens when God's truth is so deeply rooted in us, that it appears to be something with which we are born. For Christians, it is an affective integration where truth has grabbed hold of our hearts through the practices of Christian liturgy.[82] Howard's words are pertinent here: "liturgy carries us beyond the merely explicit, expository, verbal, propositional, and cerebral to the center where the dance goes on."[83]

As previously stated, the physical body often plays a key part in the formation of habits as the cultural liturgies inscribe these habits on our heart through bodily practices and rituals that train the heart. Smith writes, "Different kinds of material practices infuse noncognitive dispositions and skills in us through ritual and repetition precisely because our hearts are so closely tethered to our bodies. The senses are portals to the heart, and thus the body is a channel to our core dispositions and identity."[84] It is common knowledge that our bodily postures impact and effect our heart attitudes. By bowing physically with our knees, we train our reluctant hearts

80. Willimon, *The Service of God: How Worship and Ethics Are Related*, 34-35.

81. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation,* 28.

82. Cavaletti, Coulter, and Coulter, *The Religious Potential of the Child: Experiencing Scripture and Liturgy with Young Children*, 74, 158.

83. Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough: Worship of God in Liturgy and Sacrament*, 100.

84. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation,* 58-59.

to bow.[85] As we repeatedly engage in Christian bodily practices, they eventually become a central part of who we are, forming us into the image of God.[86]

Direction is important here. Acquired heart knowledge can point us towards God and his kingdom resulting in transformation into God's image or it can point us away from God and towards ourselves where we undergo transformation into the image of the idols we worship. The latter happens when we are immersed in secular liturgies. These secular liturgies orient our hearts away from God, resulting in a heart knowledge opposed to God and his kingdom. Sinful and self-destructive patterns in both communities and individuals operate largely at a pre-reflective level and are a direct result of secular liturgies.[87] For true transformation to occur, it is necessary for us to be immersed in Christian liturgies that point us towards God and his kingdom. These liturgies will result in a heart knowledge directed towards the kingdom of God.

Marion Roach Smith paints a powerful picture of what these habits look like in her book "The Memoir Project: A Thoroughly Non-Standardized Text for Writing and Life" as she recounts the story of a church service she put together for elderly patients with dementia and Alzheimer's disease:

> When it came to the traditional offertory, we passed around baskets of apples; instead of collecting money, we hoped to give something to the patients and their families.
>
> Going from patient to patient, I carried a huge African basket filled with apples. One very ill woman was curled up in a wheelchair, her head slumped on her chest, her hands tightened into the gnarls we associate with the very last days of life. Her caregiver shook her head, indicating that the woman would not be able to hear or understand me. But I wanted the old woman to have an apple. I got down on my knees and tried to make eye contact. It was impossible. I tried to open one of her hands, but it was like a knot. Giving up, I stood to walk to the next patient.

85. Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough: Worship of God in Liturgy and Sacrament*, 44, 104.

86. Willimon, *The Service of God: How Worship and Ethics Are Related*, 33.

87. Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices*, 88.

> At that moment, the offertory hymn began. The organ began the opening bars of "How Great Thou Art," and my husband, an accomplished baritone, began to sing what we had expected to be a solo.
>
> The woman uncurled. She straightened up in her wheelchair. At the top of her lungs, she sang every word. The caregiver gasped. I literally staggered back, then watched as the joy and triumph of this woman revealed itself. *She sang from someplace that most of us thought was long gone*. As the song ended, she curled back into her chair.[88]

This patient's knowledge of this hymn was a gut-level, pre-cognitive knowledge not built upon the articulation of ideas and beliefs. The liturgy of physically singing this hymn repeatedly over a long period of time and the resulting knowledge was deeply engrained on her heart, requiring no cognitive reflection. Through the liturgy of singing, her imagination had been ordered towards a new creation.[89] This is a picture of what these habits look like. The consistent behavioral patterns, along with the Holy Spirit's power, cause physiological changes in the brain and this change in neurological structure of the brain manifests itself in these engrained habits.[90] What is even more fascinating is that these habits then train and aim our affections.[91] This leads to the third element of this model of formation.

88. Marion Roach Smith, *The Memoir Project: A Thoroughly Non-standardized Text for Writing--and Life* (New York: Grand Central Pub., 2011), 63. Emphasis mine.

89. Jones and Barbeau, *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age: Explorations in Theological Anthropology*, 63.

90. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters*, 37.

91. Aniol, "Practice Makes Perfect: Corporate Worship and the Formation of Spiritual Virtue," 10, 97.

Element 3 of Person as Lover Model—Ultimate Desires: Love's Aim

Human beings are intentional beings, inherently attaching creatures.[92] We are desiring creatures, created in the image of a desiring God.[93] We are always aimed at something; we intend something as an object.[94] This is why an arrow is used in Figure 1—it is indicative of the intentional nature of humanity as the most elemental way humans engage the world is love or desire.[95] The words love and desire are used synonymously in this model. Furthermore, this desire precedes knowledge because we love before we know. Before we can make any sense of our rapidly developing cognitive abilities as infants, we desire and we love. It is this desire which forms knowledge.[96] For example, an infant desires food and care. If mom or dad ignore the infant repeatedly, she forms a gut level knowledge that she cannot rely on another to consistently meet her most basic needs. In this case, desire led to knowledge. Lawson writes "Our precognitive disposition—our fundamental mode of 'intending' the world—is love or desire, and it out of this fundamental 'understanding' that we can come to 'know.' What we do is intimately linked to what we desire, and so what we do determines whether, how, and what we can know."[97] Further proof for humans as first and foremost intentional lovers is the reality that if the intellect and the heart conflict, people will most often go with their hearts than with their minds; they will do what they want to do rather than what they know they know is right and good.[98] This

92. Willimon, *The Service of God: How Worship and Ethics Are Related*, 67.

93. Jones and Barbeau, *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age: Explorations in Theological Anthropology*, 175.

94. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation,* 48.

95. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom,* 50.

96. Lawson, "Theological Formation in the Church of 'the Last Men and Women,'" 336.

97. Lawson, "Theological Formation," 336-337.

98. Aniol, "Practice Makes Perfect: Corporate Worship and the Formation of Spiritual Virtue," 95.

is why this model is called the "Person as Lover" model. This is not about our secondary loves, but about our ultimate loves. Our ultimate loves are "that to which we are fundamentally oriented, what ultimately governs our vision of the good life…what we desire above all else, the ultimate desire that shapes and positions and makes sense of all our penultimate desires and actions."[99] The question is not *whether* we love or desire something as ultimate, the question is *what* we love or desire as ultimate. Whatever we love as ultimate will end up dictating the direction and shape of our loves because what we love and desire as ultimate ends up defining our identity. Our love can be aimed in different ways and pointed in different directions and it is the cultural liturgies we are immersed in which form these habits of the heart which then act on us at the core of our being to aim our loves. The bottom line is that the habits of our heart aim our loves.[100]

It should not be surprising that what we love as ultimate can escape intellectual articulation as it is more often than not subconscious and pre-reflective.[101] In fact, we might think we love one object as ultimate and actually love another object. Cultural liturgies often work on us at the subconscious level, forming habits that get a hold of our hearts and aim our desires without our conscious awareness. Our loves can be aimed by rituals we were not aware were formative liturgies.[102] The answer to what we love is discovered by an objective examination of our actions because our actions are the overflow of our loves and these loves are habituated by the practices we have assimilated through the influence of the cultural liturgies in

99. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation,* 51.

100. Willimon, *The Service of God: How Worship and Ethics Are Related*, 67.

101. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation,* 51.

102. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, 38, 45.

which we are immersed. This, in and of itself, reveals just how easy it is for the formation of our desires to happen at the subconscious level. "I might be learning to love a *telos* that I'm not even aware of and that nonetheless governs my life in unconscious ways."[103]

The secular liturgies of consumerism, and more specifically marketing, strategically tap into the desiring nature of humanity to direct human desire towards specific goods and services. These marketing strategies are intended to evoke a consumer's desire, specifically with the goal of self-construction. The promise is a self-made image tapping into our faulty perception that we are the result of our own self-construction.[104] This was the sin of our first parents as the ultimate marketer and tempter tapped into their desire, provoking Adam and Eve to define good and evil for themselves, thus constructing an identity other than their God-given identity. The fall is man turned backwards and the result is desire that forgets its direction.[105] This misdirected desire resulting in the human project of self-construction continues to this day. This is not only further proof that we are desiring creatures, it is also evidence of the importance of human desire when it comes to the life of discipleship. "Apart from God, our desire will restlessly create, adjust, and re-create an image for itself."[106] The primary issue for the Christian here is the influence of sin on the intentional nature of human beings. Sin, through secular liturgies, misdirects our loves and aims them at those things antithetical to God and his kingdom. The ease at which this can occur is sobering. Human desire must be trained so that it can be directed towards God and his kingdom if we are to experience transformation into the image of God.

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103. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, 29.

104. Jones and Barbeau, *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age: Explorations in Theological Anthropology*, 98-99.

105. Jones and Barbeau, *The Image of God,* 55, 96.

106. Jones and Barbeau, *The Image of God,* 55, 98, 101.

Jesus, as the image of God, is our model and enabler when it comes to desire as he is both our example of what redeemed desire looks like and he makes possible the sanctification of humanity's desire.[107] Jesus demonstrates to us what holy desire looks like as he is God's ultimate intention for the image of God and his desire is entirely directed towards God.[108] Not only that, Jesus redeems all of us, including our desires and through the power of the Holy Spirit our desires are sanctified resulting in progressive transformation into the ultimate image of God, whose desires are focused solely on God. This sanctification happens as a result of Christian practices which grip our desires and point them towards God and his kingdom.[109] Regular Christian practices are a way of bending our entire lives, including our desires, toward God.[110]

Element 4 of Person as Lover Model —A Kingdom: Love's End

As we have seen, to be human is to be for something, to be directed towards something. We are intentional beings and our loves are aimed in certain directions by our habits. However, our loves and desires are not just intentional, they are also teleological. The ultimate aim of desire as humans is our telos, the end to which our love is aimed. As Smith points out, to be human is to desire the kingdom, some version of the kingdom.[111] In chapter 2, our telos was defined as what is loved as ultimate; it is what one looks to for significance, security and fulfillment. We are creatures who live life leaning forward, bent on arriving at the destination we long for and love and this leaning is our telos. It is what we want and crave, the ultimate vision

107. Jones and Barbeau, *The Image of God*, 95.

108. Jones and Barbeau, *The Image of God*, 95, 104.

109. Bennett, *Practices of Love: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life of the World*, 173.

110. Willimon, Hauerwas, and Saye, *Lord, Teach Us: the Lord's Prayer & the Christian Life*, 23.

111. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation,* 54.

of the good life we desire. It is our vision for human flourishing. Furthermore, my telos is not a vision for my individual flourishing, it is my vision for the flourishing of all of humanity.[112] Our desire and longing point us in the direction of our telos and propel us towards the direction of our telos. We are affectively drawn towards this picture of human flourishing. Rather than being motivated by facts or beliefs, we are pulled by the telos for which we long. [113] While humans do not all desire the same telos, we all do desire some version of a teleological kingdom.

A telos is not communicated through intellectual exposition and embraced by a person through cognitive integration. Based on the way human education and formation takes place in the western world, one would assume that a specific telos was communicated and understood though a list of ideas, facts, propositions, concepts, values or even belief systems. However, the telos' humans embrace capture the imagination, not the intellect. It is most often a picture of the good life which captures the imagination and is embraced affectively. This is why these teleological pictures are communicated most powerfully through stories and narratives.[114] It is a truth of communication theory that stories capture the heart long before facts and information. This is because we are affective in nature before we are cognitive.[115]

The Enlightenment project's emphasis on the autonomous individual's ability to determine his or her own end, or telos, ultimately led to the rejection of the notion of a shared human telos.[116] The results was the rejection of a specific shared telos due to its imposition on an

112. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom,* 53.

113. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom,* 54.

114. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom,* 53.

115. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom,* 53.

116. Smith and. Smith, *Teaching and Christian Practices: Reshaping Faith and Learning*, 7.

individual's freedom to determine his or her own telos. The lack of a specific shared telos opened the door, in part, to consumerism as we know it today. Consumerism implies that the satisfaction of our desires is our telos. Meaning, the good life is found in the satiating of our individual desires.[117] Although the Enlightenment project denied a shared human telos, the irony is that the gratification of an individual's desire has become the 21st century American shared telos. All of this serves to confirm the intentional nature of human beings.

Everyone lives life leaning forward; we are all pointed in a certain direction and this direction is our telos. This telos is not only the rudder for our lives amidst a sea of change, it is carried in the wind that blows our sails in a specific direction.[118] The Christian's telos is not an individual choice as proposed by the Enlightenment, but rather it is a gift from God pointing us towards the forward movement of creation.[119] For Christians, our telos is not the gratification of our desires but the kingdom of God and specifically, the king himself who is the ultimate image of God. The incarnation is the fulfillment of all we have longed for. "The fulfillment of every desire God created with in us is found in Jesus Christ."[120] He alone is our forward movement and destiny and this is a complete reversal of Adam's telos towards God's intended telos for humanity.

In the first element of this formation model, we discovered that cultural liturgies are shaped by a telos and its corresponding narrative. This is because stories paint the picture of a

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117. Jones and Barbeau, *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age: Explorations in Theological Anthropology*, 99-101.

118. Willimon, *The Service of God: How Worship and Ethics Are Related*, 69.

119. Willimon, Hauerwas, and Saye, *Lord, Teach Us: the Lord's Prayer & the Christian,* 46.

120. Jones and Barbeau, *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age: Explorations in Theological Anthropology*, 103-104.

telos that then latches onto our imagination. The communal practices of cultural liturgies thus are actions which form our precognitive habits that then intentionally aim our loves towards this telos communicated and embraced through its corresponding narrative. Thus, we begin to emulate, mimic and mirror the particular teleological vision we desire.[121] It is this telos, this future goal, that shapes the person we are becoming today.

Christians must become teleological visionaries.[122] The Christian imagination must be caught up in a teleological vision of the future focused on the kingdom of God and the true image of God as human destiny. How does one develop a biblically trained imagination? It happens through the liturgies of the church. Liturgy is primary tool for the development of the Christian imagination. "Liturgy is mind – expanding work on a Christian's imagination."[123] An ever – deepening connection with God and in ever – increasing reflection of God comes about through the Holy Spirit's power under the influence of the cultural liturgies of the church. These liturgies must be embedded with the gospel story and continually point people towards the ultimate image of God, Jesus himself.

Element 5 of Person as Lover Model —An Identity: Love's Reflection

Identity is the fifth and last element of the "Person as Lover" model of formation. This identity, or reflection, is the goal of the formation process. For this study's purposes, it is the goal of every previous element.

In the previous chapter, we learned that the telos to which we connect to in worship determines our reflection and thus our identity; what we connect to at the most primal level is

121. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation,* 54.

122. Willimon, *The Service of God: How Worship and Ethics Are Related*, 34.

123. Willimon, *The Service of God*, 58, 63.

what we will reflect and ultimately become. This is because we become what we worship. Smith utilizes the words worship and love as synonyms. Our ultimate loves, longings, and desires are at the center of our lives and thus they are the objects we worship. These loves, longings and desires are at the core of our identity as we become what we worship because we worship what we love.[124] Contrary to the most popular model of education and formation, the "Person as Thinker" model, we are not defined by what we know. Our identity is not formed primarily through the cognitive integration of facts or beliefs we learn in class or from reading books. Our identity is formed primarily by what we worship and love as ultimate. Our ultimate love is constitutive of our identity.[125]

The "Person as Lover" model of formation has been building towards identity from the beginning. It is vital to keep in mind that this model, for this study's purposes, is first and foremost about the formation of human identity. The model starts with cultural liturgies. The telos-embedded, communal practices we are immersed in, called cultural liturgies, form our habits, or default tendencies, over long periods of time through repetitive behaviors. These habits are not an intellectual knowledge or belief system, rather they are a gut-level, instinctual knowledge beyond human intellect and beliefs and are more often than not precognitive and pre-reflective. These habits then determine our intentions by aiming our ultimate loves towards a telos, a vision of the good life embedded in the cultural liturgies. This aim can be described as gravitational in nature as it pulls us towards the object that is our ultimate desire. This object, the telos we live for, is the end to which our love is aimed. It is a vision of human flourishing which captures our imagination, dictates our actions, and is the future goal shaping the person we are

124. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, 2, 23.

125. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation,* 52.

becoming. This leads us to identity. Our identity is a direct reflection of our ultimate loves. This is why a mirror is used in Figure 1: the telos we live for and long for becomes our reflection, and thus our identity. As we live into this vision of the good life, we are formed into citizens who inhabit the teleological world which has captured our hearts.

It should be clear by now that Christian liturgy forms Christian identity and therefore the church's liturgy is the primary source for Christian identity.[126] Secular liturgies pointing to an illegitimate telos result in the formation of an identity of some other image. This reveals how vital it is for Christians to be engaged in a local body of faith and the Christian practices which make up its liturgies so that God's intentions for his people can be fulfilled. Cultural liturgies, whether secular or Christian, form our identities. Because these liturgies are communal, it is ultimately a communal identity. The fact that the practices of the community determine who we are means that church is not an option for Christians. This also means that church cannot just be one community of many that we are equally connected to and which hold sway over us. The body of Christ and its liturgies must be the Christian's first community and first practices. The only other option is an illegitimate telos absorbed through secular liturgies aiming our desire in the direction of a kingdom other than God's, resulting in an identity less than God's intentions for his people.

A Practical Look at the "Person as Lover" Model of Christian Formation

At this point, after all the sociological and biblical analysis, it is time to turn to the practical application. Essentially, the question is "How do young people mature in the faith?" Even more specific, the question is "How do we help young people foster an ever—deepening connection with God and an ever—increasing reflection of God so as to foster their

126. Willimon, *The Service of God: How Worship and Ethics Are Related*, 50.

transformation into the image of God?" The answer to this question is found in five foundational actions: focusing on the ultimate goal, committing to a covenant community, disentangling from cultural liturgies, submitting to the counterliturgy of communal weekly worship, and submitting to the counterliturgies of daily worship.

Action 1: Focus on the Goal

Daily life carries with it a multitude of distractions. As a result of these distractions, it is easy to lose sight of the big picture and we end up missing the forest for the trees. Some of this is a result of living in a "now" culture and some of this comes from the seemingly endless demands that life puts on us. However, we cannot afford to lose sight of the ultimate goal of our faith when leading emerging generations; we must become people of the goal and lead them in becoming people of the goal. That goal is nothing less than our formation into the image of God which results from an ever—deepening connection with God and an ever – increasing reflection of God. Ultimately, this is about us becoming what God intended for us from the beginning of creation. Humanity's goal appeared in the here and now with the arrival of the king and his kingdom and we are learning the language of the kingdom so as to become increasing more like our king.[127] This is the goal we must continually hold before young people. The gospel we preach and teach must be so much more than making it to heaven; it must include God's intention of transforming his people into his image to become more like Jesus resulting in an ever – deepening connection with God and an ever – increasing reflection of God.[128] The Apostle Paul passionately desired that Christ would be formed in the lives of those to which he wrote.[129]

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127. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters*, 104.

128. Tod E. Bolsinger, *It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian: How the Community of God Transforms Lives* (Grand Rapids: Baker Pub. Group, 2004), 27.

129. Galatians 4:19; Colossians 1:27.

That goal of the formation of the imago Dei in the life of the believer must be our goal for emerging generations.

Eugene Peterson points out that "The easiest thing in the world is to be a Christian. What is hard is to be a sinner. Being a Christian is what we were created for."[130] While it is true that the easiest thing in the world is to be a Christian, it does not mean that formation into God's image is either easy or a quick fix. We must break our ties to the culture of "now" as this culture's assumption that anything meaningful can be acquired all at once is damaging, if not deadly, to the journey of formation into the image.[131] The image of God is not formed in us immediately after we come to faith, nor is it formed in us immediately in response to a spiritual high. The image of God is formed in us over a lifetime as we engage in everyday, routine habits which the Holy Spirit uses, over time, to deepen our connection with God and increase our reflection of God. This result is our progressive transformation into the imago Dei. David Brooks refers to this journey as the "slow nature of character development" and "The humble path to the beautiful life."[132] More pointedly, Peterson refers to the journey of discipleship as "the slow path of formation into the image," "a rugged pilgrimage of discipleship in faith," and "the hazardous work of discipleship."[133] All of these phrases highlight the reality that while we are being transformed into an increasingly glorious creature in Christ through an ever-deepening connection with God and an ever-increasing reflection of God, this transformation occurs

130. Eugene H. Peterson, *Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society* (Intervarsity Press, 2000), 115.

131. Peterson, *Long Obedience,* 15-16.

132. Brooks, *The Road to Character*, 183, 269.

133. Peterson*, Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society*, 15-16, 72, 269.

unhurriedly and subtly in response to the Holy Spirit's work in light of our daily practices.[134] It is our responsibility as leaders to remind the next generation of this glorious future goal all the while helping them to see the change God is bringing about in their lives in the present. Furthermore, we must encourage and educate them with the reality that these Christian practices are indeed a means of grace God uses to form people into His image.[135] One of the best ways we can teach this to the emerging generations is through the metaphor of a pilgrim. Pilgrims are people who spend their lives on a journey to a specific destination. Hauerwas sums this up perfectly, "The Christian life is… The journey through which people are gradually and graciously transformed by the very pilgrimage to which they have been called."[136] Our life as Christian pilgrims "advances from one level to another in developing maturity" and our destination is the eschatological full image of God formed in us as individuals and as the church.[137] The pilgrimage metaphor is perfect because it helps to focus the disciple on the ultimate goal which begins in this life but finds its completion in the next.

In holding up the metaphor of pilgrim and the ultimate destination for emerging generations, it is also important to teach and remind them of the continual maintenance required by this journey.[138] Not only do we have to commit to habits we would not normally practice, we also need to continually manage and maintain those habits. James Smith supports this writing,

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134. Peterson, *Long Obedience*, 153.

135. Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices*, 9.

136. Stanley Hauerwas, "On Developing Hopeful Virtues," Christian Scholars Review Dec 1988, December 01, 1988, 110, accessed November 19, 2018, http://proxy.gordonconwell.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=33h&AN=33h-06440CC2-EB8CC21A&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

137. Peterson, *Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society*, 18.

138. Peterson, *Long Obedience*, 150.

"Our sanctification – the process of becoming holy and Christlike – is more like a Weight Watchers program than listening to a book on tape… it means changing what I want. And that requires submitting ourselves to disciplines and regimens that reach down into our deepest habits."[139] This will become even more clear below.

Action 2: Commit to a Covenant Community

Ultimately, there is no such thing as a solitary individual. While we live in a society that prides itself on individualism, this individualistic approach is reinforced and encouraged through secular liturgies that are communal by nature. Ironically, individualism is a result of a community's persuasion, pressure and influence. This is because identity formation takes place in community.[140] Sociologists have long asserted that our identities and values are formed through and by our social relationships and social structures.[141] Peter Berger points out that the individual's identity, along with his emotions and his self – interpretation, is predefined for him by society. Ultimately, an individual's reality, and thus identity, is socially constructed.[142] Social practice is the primary context for the formation of identity.[143] Simply put, identity can only be discovered within community.[144]

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139. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, 65.

140. Brooks, *The Road to Character*, 220.

141. Johnson, "Practicing Theology on a Sunday Morning: Corporate Worship as Spiritual Formation," 28.

142. Peter L. Berger, Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective (New York: Anchor Books, 2004), 136.

143. Turley, "Practicing the Kingdom: A Critical Appraisal of James K. A. Smith's Desiring the Kingdom," 142.

144. Vinay Samuel, "Mission as Transformation," Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies 19, no. 4 (October 2002): 246, accessed March 11, 2016, doi:10.1177/026537880201900404.

The fact that identity is socially constructed is of primary importance to this study. The bottom line is that our identity will be formed by the community to which we commit and submit ourselves. The question for the Christian is: which community will I allow to form my identity? The answer must be the Spirit – infused community of faith founded upon the story of the kingdom told within scripture. The kingdom narrative provides the story in which our reality is situated and the church provides the social context in which that reality is constructed. The only place to experience the reality of our formation into the image of God is "through the work and life of the Christian community."[145] It takes a church to raise a Christian.[146]

American individualism emphatically proclaims that it is not necessary to be a part of the church to be a Christian. However, the Bible does not acknowledge the solitary Christian.[147] Committing and submitting to a church body is essential. The Christian's call to commit and submit to a church is both assumed and commanded by God in scripture.[148] Additionally, scripture reveals that God does not work with individuals in isolation. A few examples of this include Adam and Eve in Genesis 1, the formation of the nation of Israel to be a kingdom of priests, Jesus' 12 disciples in the gospels, and the formation of the early church in Acts 1:15. The Christian faith is not a solo pilgrimage but rather a communal journey towards an ever – deepening connection with God and an ever – increasing reflection of God as we are progressively formed into the image of God. Therefore, the church is the God-ordained context for our identity formation into the image of God.

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145. Bolsinger, *It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian: How the Community of God Transforms Lives*, 27.

146. This is the title of Bolsinger's book.

147. Peterson, *Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society*, 176.

148. There are many examples of this. Hebrews 10:24-25 is one example of God commanding it and Paul's words on the spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 is an example of Scripture assuming it.

The counterliturgies of the Christian community are no different than the secular liturgies that seek to aim our love; they are communal in nature and they will form us, consciously or subconsciously. To become a Christian is to become part of a different community with a different set of practices.[149] These practices, or counterliturgies, are embedded with the gospel narrative and have the ultimate goal of aiming our love towards the kingdom of God as our one true telos. This can only happen in the context of the church and thus reveals the radical importance of committing to a covenant community. This means that the church is the only true life – transforming environment. While secular communities seek to transform us into their image, the Christian church, through the power of the Holy Spirit, transforms us into the image of God, which is Jesus, the telos of the church. We will all be transformed; what we are transformed into is ultimately a byproduct of the community to which we commit and submit.

It is also important to keep in mind that the imago Dei is a corporate goal. While there is an individual aspect to our transformation, there is a profound corporate sense of the image of God where all believers are developing in the same direction towards a complete unification in Jesus, the true image of God.[150] That the image of God is a corporate destiny is supported by Colossians 3:11. The further transformation progresses, the more individualism disappears as people live out their new corporate humanity. Ephesians 4:11-13 echoes Colossians 3 explaining how the spiritual gifts and roles of the church work together in the body resulting in the corporate goal defined as "the unity of the faith" and maturity.[151] The practices of the church are communal practices that extend from the 21st century church all the way back to the first century

149. Hauerwas, "Discipleship as a Craft, Church as a Disciplined Community," 884.

150. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*, 239.

151. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 239.

church and these practices exist to deepen the church's connection to God and increase the church's reflection of God.[152] While individual people are in God's image, Biblically, people are always envisioned in relationships "because that is how God has created and called them to live."[153] This reinforces the importance of committing to a church.

The importance of committing to a community of faith is further supported by the doctrine of the Trinity. Bolsinger points to the community of the Trinity as the ultimate example for the community of the church. Just as a God exists as three distinct persons, yet one God, the church also exists as distinct persons who form one body. He writes, "The church as a transforming communion is founded on the doctrine of the Trinity… The doctrine of the Trinity teaches us that since God is a relationship, we image God only in relationship."[154] Commitment to a Christian community is not an option; it is mandatory. Practically we must challenge emerging generations and their parents with this truth.

Action 3: Disentangle from Cultural Liturgies

As we have seen, every liturgy is a formative education.[155] Secular liturgies carry within them a rival story, which results in rival liturgies aiming our hearts towards rival loves. Essentially, the disordered secular liturgies act on our habits which then aim our desires at a rival telos which is less than God intended. More often than not, sin seeps its way into our lives as a result of ingrained habits formed by secular liturgies.[156] Thus, our next step is to disentangle

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152. Willimon, Hauerwas, and Saye, *Lord, Teach Us: the Lord's Prayer & the Christian Life*, 40.

153. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*, 240.

154. Bolsinger*, It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian: How the Community of God Transforms Lives*, 58, 61.

155. Lawson, "Theological Formation in the Church of 'the Last Men and Women,'" 337.

156. Aniol, "Practice Makes Perfect: Corporate Worship and the Formation of Spiritual Virtue," 100.

from these secular liturgies which are consciously or subconsciously deforming us into their image. There are two steps to this process: the first step is discernment and the second is abstention.

The discernment process begins with reflection on the liturgies of our daily lives. We must take a liturgical audit of our lives, unveiling the liturgical shape of practices in the secular culture.[157] Smith calls this cultural exegesis. Cultural exegesis is a spiritual discipline focused on discerning the shape of the kingdom toward which cultural practices are aimed.[158] The ultimate goal is to become conscious of, and understand, the nature of the cultural context in which we live and the telos at which those cultural liturgies are aimed. Smith recommends a discipline something akin to the examen of Saint Ignatius of Loyola where we can trace practices back to the secular liturgy we are allowing to aim our love. Some potential questions to ask during this time of reflection include: what vision of human flourishing is embedded in this practice? What telos does it glorify? What sort of person will I become after being immersed in this or that cultural liturgy? What story or narrative is embedded in the practices?[159]

Before we move on to the next step of abstention, it would be helpful to look at a few examples illustrating what this discernment process might look like. Let's take the liturgy-soaked setting of the mall as an example.[160] Even though it may not seem like it, the mall is replete with liturgical practices. It is not liturgical as a result of the knowledge it teaches us, it is liturgical as a result of the way it aims our hearts towards the rival kingdom of consumerism. The minute you

157. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, 93.

158. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 89.

159. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 94, 114.

160. This section on the mall as a liturgical place has been taken and adapted from James Smith's *You are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*.

walk into the mall, you are bombarded with the liturgies of consumerism: the sights, the smells, the architecture, the images, the kiosks, and even the mannequins paint the picture of a vision of the good life. The ultimate message of these liturgies is "I lack therefore I need..." Consumerism promises us a life of happiness and fulfillment through the act of consumption. In fact, the directory standing at the entrance, shows consumers all of the locations they can purchase fulfillment and happiness. Our desires are subtly aimed through the practices of consumerism and before you know it, our hearts are being lured towards this teleological kingdom. We eventually end up reflecting the telos we desire through imitation and the next thing you know we are living as citizens who inhabit the world of consumerism we imagine as the good life. Our identity is shaped by the aiming of our loves to the end of the kingdom of consumerism as opposed to the kingdom of God. This reveals the deformative nature of secular liturgies. They are the deadly air we breathe, slowly sucking the oxygen out of us and ultimately keeping us from experiencing God's intention for us which is transformation into the image of God. How did we learn consumerism? How was our identity transformed to that of inhabits of the kingdom of consumerism? All of this was a result of the telos-laden cultural liturgies which formed our habits and aimed our ultimate loves towards the kingdom of consumerism. We end up reflecting consumerism, the rival vision of the good life we have been subtly drawn to through the power of the cultural liturgies of the mall. No amount of book knowledge could transform a human being like the cultural liturgies of consumerism does. This is just one picture of the power of secular liturgies. This is a formative education as opposed to just an informative education.[161]

Secular liturgies are not just at the mall; we also experience these liturgies at church. A few weeks ago, I attended a youth group of a pastor I have the privilege of coaching. I was

161. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation,* 31.

scheduled to attend a portion of the meeting for a routine visit to observe and give feedback. Instead of the normal youth talk, the group watched "The Butterfly Circus," a 20-minute independent film starring Nick Vujicic, a Christian evangelist and motivational speaker who was born without any arms or legs.[162] Though I had planned to leave when the film started, I was drawn in by the film and compelled to watch it to completion. The story takes place during the Great Depression. Will, played by Nick Vujicic, is an angry and bitter man who is featured in the freak show of a dismal and gloomy traveling circus and sideshow. One night, Mr. Mendez, the ringmaster of another circus, the Butterfly Circus, comes to town to visit the less than happy circus and its freak show. The Butterfly Circus is a circus led by the compassionate and charismatic Mr. Mendez and includes people who have a sad past full of weaknesses and mistakes but who now use their past in a positive way to bring joy to people suffering under the weight of the Great Depression. When Mr. Mendez encounters Will on display as the headliner of the freak show, Mr. Mendez sees past Will's "freak of nature" appearance as a man with no limbs, affirming Will's magnificence to his face. Will responds by angrily spitting in Mendez' face.

Something in Will's encounter with Mr. Mendez piques his curiosity enough to cause him to escape the freak show, hiding in the bed of the Butterfly Circus' truck where he is transported back to the home base of the Butterfly Circus, unknown to anyone in the circus. After being discovered in the truck bed, he is unconditionally welcomed by the circus performers but is told he cannot participate in the circus as a freak of nature; he must first find a way to perform using his unique situation as a limbless man in a way that brings joy to people. One day

162. Joshua Weigel and Rebekah Weigel, *The Butterfly Circus*, *YouTube* (YouTube, 2011), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p98KAEif3bI.

Will discovers that although he has no arms and legs, he can still maneuver his body in a way that he can swim. This then results in his circus act of diving from the top of a raised platform into a small tank of water. Will has found his unique role in the circus through what he can contribute.

When the movie was over, an intern went up to the front of the youth group and asked students what they "got" from the movie. The first student to share said, "I was reminded that we can do whatever we put our minds to." This was followed up with other students echoing the same exact message. This stopped me in my tracks. I had been too captured by the inspirational nature of the movie to reflect on its cultural liturgies and the telos embedded in those liturgies. This movie and its cultural liturgies merely reinforced the American telos of the limitless, autonomous self who can accomplish virtually anything with the right amount of will power and self-effort. This is not the telos and narrative of the gospel and it is not the telos or narrative we should be communicating to students at the expense of the gospel. The gospel is not a matter of self-help merely echoing the 21st century American narrative. We are not making ourselves better through our own efforts.[163] This is another example that illustrates the importance of the practice of discerning cultural liturgies.

These are just two examples among many of the identity-forming secular liturgies. These two examples do not include sporting events immersing us in cultural liturgies shaped by the telos of American nationalism.[164] Just like all rival kingdoms, American nationalism is a vision of the good life which is antithetical to the Biblical vision of the good life. The previous examples also do not include the American university whose cultural liturgies form habits which

163. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters*, 257.

164. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation,* 105-107.

aim our loves in the direction of the telos of human reason used for the advancement of the human race, the self-centered pursuit of personal pleasure, and the success of career advancement.[165] All of this demonstrates the vital importance of the discernment of cultural liturgies. Our very identity is at stake.

The next step of the disentangling from cultural liturgies is abstention. This is the practice of renouncing cultural liturgies that form our habits and aim our loves, pointing us towards a rival telos. The key word here is repentance which Eugene Peterson describes as "always and everywhere the first word in the Christian life."[166] Repentance is stepping towards God by stepping away from the secular liturgies of the world. "It is a renunciation of the lies we have been told about ourselves and our neighbors and our universe."[167] The act of repentance is where we "put off" the old self or "put to death" our earthly nature.[168] This happens as a result of identifying the cultural liturgies we are immersed in, acknowledging them for what they are, and renouncing them through repentance. In this case, the habit we are acquiring is that of breaking old habits.[169] We put off these old habits by rejecting the cultural liturgies which aim our loves and form our identities. This naturally leads to our next habit.

Action 4: Submit to the Counterliturgies of Communal Weekly Worship

Introduction to the Counterliturgies of Communal Weekly Worship

165. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom,* 116.

166. Peterson, *Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society*, 29.

167. Peterson, *Long Obedience*, 29.

168. Ephesians 4:22 and Colossians 3:5, respectively.

169. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters*, 142.

As we have discovered, the liturgies we are immersed in form habits which then aim our loves towards a specific telos that results in an identity reflecting that telos. Secular liturgies create rival desires pointing towards a rival kingdom, thus creating a rival identity. This rival identity is anything less than the image of God which God intended. We have built up a lifetime of these habits which point us toward idols and ultimately, can never satisfy. These habits must be undone and replaced with counterliturgies.[170] Counterliturgies are kingdom liturgies we can practice in place of secular liturgies which form within us kingdom habits aiming our desires towards the kingdom of God, thus resulting in a kingdom identity. It is to the counterliturgies of the weekly Christian worship service that we now turn.

There are a few key truths regarding liturgy that must be addressed before we analyze the liturgy of the weekly worship service. First and foremost, the church's weekly worship service is at the heart of Christian discipleship and is the key to our transformation into the image of God.[171] The practices of weekly worship should be at the center of the Christian's life.[172] Weekly worship provides the choreography for all the other practices of the community of faith and is the foundation for all other Christian practices.[173] Most Christian churches in America teach that the heart of Christian discipleship is daily time alone with God. While regular time alone with God is important, it is not what is most important; the church's worship is what is most important in regards to the transformation of God's people. James Smith refers to the

170. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, 59, 61.

171. Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 68.

172. Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough: Worship of God in Liturgy and Sacrament*, 53.

173. Bass and Richter, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People, 2nd Edition*, 118.

liturgies of the weekly worship service as Liturgy (with a capital L) which generates liturgy (lowercase l) that is part of our daily routine throughout the rest of the week.[174]

Next, it is important for us to keep in mind that God is the primary actor in worship. This ensures that our worship is theocentric. When we assume we are the primary actors, worship not only becomes anthropocentric, it very easily devolves into either an experience of expression or experience of inspiration.[175] While there is nothing inherently wrong with expression or inspiration, neither should serve as a replacement for worship. Bolsinger writes "We are inspired by ocean waves and the child's gaze, but we respond to that inspiration by following God and worshiping him as he has told us to: as part of the community of his people."[176] Furthermore, worship at its core is formative and not expressive; it is what God uses to change our desires and point them towards his kingdom, thus transforming us into his image.[177] This means that worship is first and foremost an act, or practice, and not an experience and we are participants in worship, not spectators.[178]

Thirdly, repetition is vital when it comes to the counterliturgies of worship. We live in a time where repetition is scoffed at due to the appearance of inauthenticity and insincerity. The rote "mindlessness" of repeating a specific action or actions seems to lack the authentic nature of human expressiveness. However, the goal in the repetition of the counterliturgies of the weekly worship service is the transformation of our desires as opposed to the spontaneous expression of our love. Learning to love is the development of a skill which takes practice, and practice takes

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174. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, 68.

175. Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 74.

176. Bolsinger*, It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian: How the Community of God Transforms Lives,* 173.

177. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, 77, 80.

178. Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough: Worship of God in Liturgy and Sacrament*, 45-46.

repetition.[179] Just ask any major league baseball infielder, or any professional athlete for that matter. For Christians, continuous repetitive weekly counterliturgies are the way to internalize the reality of the kingdom.[180]

Lastly, worship characterizes us. James Smith insightfully points out that Christian worship characterizes us in two ways. First of all, worship places us as characters in God's ultimate story so we can live out our identities as his image bearers in the context of God's kingdom story. The structure of biblical liturgy follows the structure of the gospel, thus reenacting the gospel. As a believers hear and engage the biblical story each week through weekly liturgies, it becomes the script of their lives resulting in a new pattern for living.[181] By reenacting each week who they are in Christ, Christian worshipers progressively become who they truly are and who God intended them to be – men and women created in God's image.[182] God's word thus becomes the orienting center of our reality, precognitively shaping our perception of everything.[183] When the biblical narrative is our script, it reminds us of the main story and where we fit in that story.[184] The second manner in which worship characterizes us happens through the rhythms of worship. Through these rhythms, the Holy Spirit inscribes in us the character that transforms us into a certain kind of person: a person created in the image of God.[185] It does this not by teaching us how to think, but by teaching us how to love. It invites us

179. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, 80-81.

180. Willimon, *The Service of God: How Worship and Ethics Are Related*, 105.

181. Bolsinger*, It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian: How the Community of God Transforms Lives,* 121.

182. Aniol, "Practice Makes Perfect: Corporate Worship and the Formation of Spiritual Virtue," 103, 104.

183. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, 85.

184. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters*, 283.

185. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, 89.

into the biblical story and engrains that story of love on our hearts.[186] Communal weekly worship is "a foretaste of the everlasting Sabbath day that will be enjoyed fully at the marriage supper of the Lamb."[187]

Weekly communal Christian worship invites worshipers into God's kingdom story with four chapters: gathering, listening, communing, and sending.[188] Although there is much diversity within how these chapters look, these chapters ultimately convey the gospel story of scripture when they are lived out week in and week out.

Counterliturgies of Weekly Worship: The Four Chapters of Communal Weekly Worship

Chapter 1: Gathering/assembling

Worship begins with the assembling of the people which is the movement of the people toward God.[189] This gathering of the Christian community each week to worship the triune God has been going on for two millennia. It may be tempting to think that Christians come to a worship service on their own invitation and initiative. However, those called to worship arrive in response to God's invitation; we are invited by God into His triune life. "God initiates worship – we gather at his gracious invitation."[190] God is the great assembler and his people are his assembly.[191] Elements of this chapter of worship may include a procession, a call to worship, a

186. Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 85.

187. Michael Horton, *A Better Way, A: Rediscovering the Drama of God-Centered Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Pub. Group, 2003), 24.

188. James Smith writes about these chapters of weekly worship in his books "You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Formation" and "Desiring the Kingdom."

189. Webber, *Worship Old & New,* 161.

190. Bolsinger*, It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian: How the Community of God Transforms Lives,* 89.

191. Webber, *Worship Old & New,* 153.

greeting, a prayer or invocation, singing, and a time of confession accompanied by an assurance of pardon.

The procession tends to be reserved for high church liturgy. During the procession, the priests, deacons, acolytes, and choir members proceed through the front doors of the church and walk down the center aisle to take their appointed places on the chancel. This procession is a symbolic gesture in which God's servants are moving towards God's presence to worship him.[192]

In the call to worship, Christians are called to embrace their identity as the image of God, as a community of people who are being transformed through an ever – deepening connection with God and an ever– increasing reflection of God. This is why the weekly worship service is referred to as a covenant renewal ceremony. In the service, God renews his covenant with us and the call to worship reflects the divine initiative in the covenant itself.[193] In this call to worship, we are called to God, where we can experience this ever – deepening connection with God and ever – increasing reflection of God through His sanctifying power, ultimately making it possible for us to live out our identity as His image.[194] The call is not an end in and of itself, it is a preparation of the people to hear the word of God.[195]

The greeting is next and generally has two elements: God's greeting to us and our greetings to each other. Upon our arrival in response to God's call, he then greets us with a blessing that echoes the creational blessing in Genesis 1:28.[196] It is a blessing intimately linked to

192. Webber, *Worship,* 156.

193. Horton, *A Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of God-Centered Worship*, 19, 26.

194. Willimon, *The Service of God: How Worship and Ethics Are,* 119.

195. Webber, *Worship Old & New,* 156.

196. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, 168.

our identity as those created in his image, acknowledging that humanity's flourishing, and thus humanity's telos, is dependent upon God and is found in a connection with God and a reflection of God.[197] After God's greeting to us, we then greet one another. The order of greetings is crucial: because God has graciously stooped to greet us, we can lovingly greet one another.[198]

The greetings are often followed by a prayer or invocation. To invoke is to make a plea or call upon someone or something. In this case, we call upon God to be present with us.[199] In singing, which Smith calls "hymning the language of the Kingdom," words are given much more power as singing captures our imaginations and our hearts. Additionally, there is a very natural liturgical bent to singing as it is an embodied action, utilizing our mouths, vocal cords, tongues, and diaphragms. Howard sums this up: "We are creatures who are made to bow, not just spiritually…but with kneebones and neck muscles. We are creatures who cry out…not just in our hearts but with…but with our feet, singing great hymns with our tongues..."[200] Singing and identity go hand-in-hand as words and music actually form Christians in a communal identity which flows out of the timeless gospel story.[201]

Lastly, the gathering chapter often closes with a time of corporate confession and an assurance of pardon. This time of confession reminds us that we are sinful people influenced by secular liturgies, resulting in disordered habits and rival loves, which aim our hearts away from the one true God and towards rival kingdoms. After the prayer of corporate confession, the

197. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 168.

198. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom,* 169.

199. Webber, *Worship Old & New,* 158.

200. Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough: Worship of God in Liturgy and Sacrament*, 37.

201. Bass and Richter, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People, 2nd Edition*, 190.

pastor/worship leader proclaims an assurance of pardon based on the grace God has extended to us through the New Covenant. This is not to be confused with a priest who mediates God's forgiveness; this assurance of pardon is a proclamation based on the promises of God and the work of Jesus Christ and is a reminder of all that God has done for His people.

Chapter 2: Hearing God's Word

The second chapter of worship is that of listening to God's word as it is read and proclaimed. At this place in the worship service, there is a shift in mood which is expressed in words like instruction, teaching, hearing, listening and responding.[202] This chapter, or act, usually includes the public reading of scripture (including law and gospel), the preaching of scripture, and the recitation of the Nicene or Apostles' Creed. It should be evident at this time that this chapter of worship is not the only time during the service where the Bible is communicated. The entire service communicates the realities of scripture and the grand narrative it tells. However, at this point in the worship service, specific passages of scripture are read and proclaimed in the context of this grand narrative. All of this, Smith points out, is because the Bible is the script of the worshiping community, which essentially means three things. First, the Bible is a story revealing the identity of God's people as his image. Second, the Bible is the constitution of the kingdom of God, revealing our telos and the specifics of how our behavior is connected to our family identity.[203] Lastly, the Bible is the primary source for our imagination.

202. Webber, *Worship Old & New,* 150.

203. Bolsinger*, It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian: How the Community of God Transforms Lives,* 123.

As Christians, we are called to order our imaginations toward the new creation.[204] Essentially, it gives us a new lens for which we can view and understand the world around us.[205]

The public reading of scripture usually starts with the reading of the law. The law instructs us about God's will for our lives and how we can "live with the grain of the universe."[206] Additionally however, the reading of the law brings conviction due to our inability to measure up to it and ultimately save ourselves.[207] This is why the public reading of the law is usually followed up with the public reading of the New Testament often concluding with a gospel reading, reminding us of the new covenant work of Jesus, the true image of God, who created a way for us to have an ever – deepening connection with God and an ever – increasing reflection of God. Through the public reading of scripture, we see, once again, how we have been written into God's kingdom script. This reading should be characterized by active involvement on the part of God's people.[208] This is best witnessed in either the reading or singing of the psalms where one individual says/sings the first stanza and the community of faith responds by corporately speaking/singing the second stanza. This interactive practice continues for each verse of the assigned reading.

After the public reading of scripture comes the preaching of the word which is yet another opportunity to make God's kingdom story our story.[209] Michael Horton points out that

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204. Jones and Barbeau, *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age: Explorations in Theological Anthropology*, 63.

205. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, 194-197.

206. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, 97.

207. Horton, *A Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of God-Centered Worship*, 43.

208. Webber, *Worship Old & New*, 163.

209. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, 98.

the preached Word is "God's talk – the kind of talk that produces a new people."[210] According to Horton, preaching is one of two "props" that God uses to strengthen our faith (the other one being the sacraments).[211] Bolsinger builds on this pointing out that the preached word provides for our ignorance and dullness (whereas the visual display of the sacraments provide for our weakness).[212] True biblical preaching is where God is not just the topic, but the actor. As with the public reading of scripture, the preaching of God's commands brings conviction and the preaching of Christ in his gospel "creates and keeps on creating faith and its fruit."[213] In this understanding, the preached words are much more than a human's words about God because as Jesus is preached, he is present and active through the Holy Spirit doing extraordinary work through the ordinary act of preaching. On God's extraordinary use of ordinary things, Horton writes "ordinary preaching raises the spiritually dead to life, while ordinary water, bread, and wine are taken up by God as signs and seals of God's saving presence."[214]

This listening chapter may also include the recitation of the Nicene or Apostles' Creed. These creeds compress the kingdom story in relatively few words. Not only do we recite the entire framework of Christian truth in these creeds, we also enact the gospel events and the deep meaning of those events.[215] Creeds have developed a bad reputation in this postmodern era. For many, they seem inauthentic, outdated, and irrelevant. However, the church's historical creeds

210. Horton, *A Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of God-Centered Worship*, 38.

211. Horton, *A Better Way*, 29.

212. Bolsinger*, It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian: How the Community of God Transforms Lives,* 101.

213. Horton, *A Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of God-Centered Worship*, 38, 43.

214. Horton, *A Better Way*, 25.

215. Webber, *Worship Old & New*, 75-76.

are needed in the church now more than ever due to the decline in biblical literacy. The Apostle's Creed contains essential Christian beliefs of which a large percentage of Christians today are ignorant. If we think of these historical Christian creeds as much like the Pledge of Allegiance, it makes more sense. The Pledge of Allegiance is a secular liturgy calling "worshipers" to declare loyalty to the United States of America. The majority of Americans grew up saying the pledge at the beginning of every school day and therefore, it is ingrained in our memories and our hearts. The Apostle's Creed is much like the Pledge of Allegiance. It is recited in unison regularly and is a pledge, confessing our loyalty to the triune God. The creed is also a reminder that we are not alone, as this creed has been handed down to us from Christians who went before us. This is why the Apostles' Creed is included in some of the most formative catechisms of the church. Additionally, reciting this creed is a reminder that our identity is found in the kingdom story of the words we speak. The more we recite this creed, the more it takes root in our memory, and eventually in our hearts, providing fuel for our imaginations and giving us weaponry to use against the rival liturgies attempting to aim our loves away from the one true God.[216] Additionally, the recitation of creeds is liturgical in nature as it is communal and embodied, using our vocal chords, our facial muscles, our tongues, our stomach muscles, and our leg muscles as we stand to proclaim the creed together.

Chapter 3: Communing

The third chapter is that of communing with God and with one another. This chapter includes prayer, the offering and the sacraments. The first element, prayer, is the lifelong practice of bending our lives towards God and his kingdom.[217] The Latin phrase "Lex orandi, lex

216. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, 190-191.

217. Willimon, Hauerwas, and Saye, *Lord, Teach Us: the Lord's Prayer & the Christian Life,* 22.

credenda" attributed to Prosper of Aquitaine, sums this up very well. The translation is "As the church prays, so it believes" indicating that the liturgical act of praying points our hearts towards the kingdom, thus training our loves.[218] We are transformed as we join with others and lift our voices to heaven.[219] There are five main types of prayer which can be practiced at this time: prayers of adoration, confession, petition, praise and thanksgiving.[220] This prayer is a reminder that we, as God's people, do not exist for ourselves. One other type of prayer that is often included in this chapter is that of praying scripture (which includes the Lord's Prayer). Praying scripture is the act of praying God's very words back to Him. Here, we take specific passages of the Bible and corporately pray them back to God. Oftentimes, portions of the psalms or Paul's prayers are utilized. The Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6 is another common way to pray scripture. "The prayers of the church take us to places we could have never imagined left to our own resources."[221]

The offering is yet another element of the communing chapter of worship where we respond to God in both gratitude and acknowledgement that he is ultimately the owner and sovereign king of all things, including our resources. This liturgical act is a habitual practice, emphasizing a new economy and a counter-cultural approach to money which contradicts the liturgies of American consumerism and places us, once again, in God's kingdom story.[222] The offering is evidence that there is nothing off limits when it comes to God's transforming power;

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218. Johnson, "Practicing Theology on a Sunday Morning: Corporate Worship as Spiritual Formation," 48.

219. Johnson, "Practicing Theology on a Sunday Morning," 38, 44.

220. Webber, *Worship Old & New*, 167.

221. Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough: Worship of God in Liturgy and Sacrament,* 48.

222. Smith*, Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, 204.

he wants to transform all of us, including our habits towards money, into the image of his son. The final element of this chapter of worship is the eucharist. Since the eucharist is a sacrament, the Lord's Supper will be addressed in a subsequent section along with baptism.

Chapter 4: Sending/Dismissal

The fourth and final chapter of the worship service begins when the worshipers are sent into the world to live out their identity as the image of God. Just like the first chapter of gathering indicates motion, so does the sending chapter. In the final chapter however, the movement is directed outward toward the world, rather than inward toward a communal meeting with God.[223] This sending is a replay of the original commissioning God gave to Adam and Eve as we are challenged to take up the same identity given to us at creation. This is the same identity Jesus has both modeled for us and made possible for us. The worship service concludes the same way it began: with a blessing. When God called us to gather, he blessed us. Now as he sends us out, he blesses us yet again.[224] We are sent out as his images to call others to an ever-deepening connection with him and ever-increasing reflection of him. Historically, this chapter has always been the shortest act of worship. High church liturgy often includes a recessional hymn in which the priests, deacons, acolytes, and choir members "recess" out the same way they entered, symbolically demonstrating the "sending out" of the dismissal.[225]

Next, we turn to the sacraments of the weekly worship service. The sacraments of communion and baptism are not necessarily weekly practices, yet they are regular practices

223. Webber, *Worship Old & New*, 150.

224. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, 207.

225. Webber, *Worship Old & New,* 192.

which are a part of the church's counterliturgies which God uses to form his people into his image.

Counterliturgies of Communal Weekly Worship: The Sacraments

Introduction to the sacraments

The sacraments of the Christian faith, the eucharist and baptism, are liturgical acts of worship Smith describes as "hot spots where God's formative, illuminating presence is particularly intense."[226] Bolsinger expands on this, writing that the sacraments are "the primary way in which the real presence of Jesus establishes, maintains, nourishes, and empowers, through the Holy Spirit, a transforming union with the believer."[227] The Lord's Supper and baptism are "props" given to us by God to help us overcome our suspicion and mistrust of God.[228] This happens, in part, through our participation in the visible illustrations of the sacraments. In ordinary elements such as bread, wine and water, we are placed, yet again, in the kingdom story as God uses this liturgical worship to deepen our connection with Him and increase our reflection of Him through the aiming of our hearts.

Baptism as a sacrament

The sacrament of baptism is an identity-defining initiation which sets Christians apart, much like the act of circumcision set the nation of Israel apart.[229] The act of baptism leads to a significant alteration of the Christian's reality and is when the pilgrimage of transformation into

226. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, 148.

227. Bolsinger, *It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian: How the Community of God Transforms Lives,* 77.

228. Bolsinger, *It Takes a Church,,* 77.

229. Willimon, *The Service of God: How Worship and Ethics are Related*, 98.

the true identity as the image of God under God's kingdom rule officially begins.[230] Baptism is a sign of God's covenant illustrating a new birth and a new identity; it expresses both God's embrace of us and our submissive embrace of him.[231] However, it does even more than that: baptism makes exactly what it promises—a new person and a new people.[232] While there are a lot of manmade boundaries distinguishing one group of people from another, the sacrament of baptism discloses that there is only one division that makes a difference: the delineation between the old and new worlds, between death and life, between the kingdoms of man and the kingdom of God.[233] In baptism, Jesus reorders the social world, signifying we all can embrace the identity of the image of God regardless of social status, gender, or race.[234] Smith highlights just how powerful baptism is as it reconfigures and redefines the family. The primary family for worshipers is no longer the nuclear family, but rather the church. Furthermore, the sacrament of baptism is a communal practice involving the entire community of faith. This is most evident when the church, corporately and liturgically, commits to be an active part of the freshly baptized person's life of faith indicating that we are all in this pilgrimage together.

Baptism also communicates to all of those involved that no one accidently drifts into God's family; there must be a dying and a rising which is signified through the baptismal act.[235] Baptism is not the water that cleanses but rather the flood that drowns the old Adam leading to a

230. Willimon, Hauerwas, and Saye, *Lord, Teach Us: The Lord's Prayer & the Christian Life,* 58.

231. Bolsinger, *It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian: How the Community of God Transforms Lives,* 171.

232. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, 183.

233. Willimon, Hauerwas, and Saye, *Lord, Teach Us: The Lord's Prayer & the Christian Life*, 55.

234. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, 183.

235. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters*, 281.

death to sin. It is a sacramental participation in Jesus' death which has a past reality (our justification as a result of our unification with Christ) and an anticipated future (our continued sanctification and ultimate glorification in the image of God as God continues his baptismal work in us).[236] Through baptism, we witness to the kingdom, proclaiming to all those present who are not citizens of heaven that incorporation into this new reality is available to all.[237]

The Eucharist as a sacrament

The sacrament of the eucharist does not initiate people into a new reality but rather secures a community of brothers and sisters in Christ with clearly defined boundaries. Whereas baptism is a ritual of initiation, the Lord's Supper is a ritual of belonging to the body of Christ; it is a practice which sets God's people apart from those who don't believe.[238] The practice of the Lord's Supper allows Christians to see the kingdom more clearly. Normally we see the kingdom of God only in glimpses whereas there are those moments, like the eucharist, where we are able to see the kingdom in its fullness.[239] The eucharist is a sanctifying practice which is a sign of God's grace. As physical food strengthens our bodies, our souls are strengthened by the spiritual food of the body and blood of Christ.[240] Its sanctifying power is a gift of grace from God. As we regularly receive this gift, we experience an ever – deepening connection to God and an ever – increasing reflection of God as we are transformed more and more into his image. Essentially, the eucharist is a feast whereby Christians become what they eat.[241] It is a time when Christians

236. Willimon, *The Service of God: How Worship and Ethics are Related*, 105.

237. Willimon, *The Service of God*, 99.

238. Zahniser, *Symbol and Ceremony: Making Disciples Across Cultures*, 67.

239. Willimon, Hauerwas, and Saye, *Lord, Teach Us: The Lord's Prayer & the Christian Life*, 72-73.

240. Willimon, *The Service of God: How Worship and Ethics are Related*, 123.

241. Willimon, *The Service of God*, 125.

who are struggling with disordered loves can "taste and see that the Lord is good" and through this sacramental counterliturgy, have their loves aimed at God and his kingdom.[242] It is vitally important to keep in mind that the eucharistic celebration requires repetition. Like any other practice, it requires habituation for it to become our reality. "Sanctification takes constant, life – long attentiveness, habits, and care to embody the character of Christ."[243] The practice of the Lord's Supper is a "tangible display and performance of the gospel" that captures our imagination, takes root in our hearts, and eventually becomes second nature as we repeat it regularly.[244] It must be emphasized that this is a communal practice. It is not a new practice as the church has engaged in this communal, transformative practice for over 2,000 years.

Lastly, like baptism, this practice both looks back to the past and forward to the future; it is about memory and anticipation. It remembers Jesus' body, broken for believers and it looks forward to when he will return in glory and complete his transformation of his people into the image of God.[245] When we celebrate the Lord's supper, we catch a glimpse of what that heavenly feast will be like.[246] When we eat and drink, we participate in a feast of forgiveness and reconciliation in the present which is a foretaste of the eschatological kingdom to come.[247] As a result of our participation in this active reenactment of the gospel, we are shaped by God.[248]

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242. Horton, *A Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of God-Centered Worship*, 19.

243. Willimon, *The Service of God: How Worship and Ethics are Related*, 127.

244. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, 198-199.

245. Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough: Worship of God in Liturgy and Sacrament,* 105.

246. Willimon, Hauerwas, and Saye, *Lord, Teach Us: The Lord's Prayer & the Christian Life*, 68.

247. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, 200.

248. Aniol, "Practice Makes Perfect: Corporate Worship and the Formation of Spiritual Virtue," 103.

It is clear that both sacraments are practices requiring repetition. Neither practices are about our creaturely work. As we engage in these liturgical practices through faith, God does his supernatural work forming our habits and aiming our desires at his kingdom resulting in an ever – deepening connection with God and an ever – increasing connection of God which is manifested in our progressive transformation into his image. Our work in the practices of the sacraments is indicated in the biblical text through passive verbs revealing that both baptism and the eucharist can only be received by us. Our role as Christians is to actively appropriate these gifts in our lives. This is a life-long, repeated practice.[249] Baptism may indicate a once and for all experience taking only a few minutes, but it takes our entire lives to appropriate.[250] The eucharist may only be celebrated once a week, or even once a month, but it is a sign of "the necessity for continuous, habitual, ritualized, constant communal encounter with the presence of God so that we might be continually formed into God's people, the body we are meant to be."[251] The sacraments of baptism and the eucharist must be habitual acts, taken seriously, and practiced regularly. Furthermore, emerging generations must be educated along the way in the life – changing and identity – altering realities of these practices.

Counterliturgies of Communal Weekly Worship: Liturgical Time

Introduction to liturgical time as a counterliturgy of communal weekly worship

Human beings are rhythmic creatures. One evidence of this is found in our yearly celebrations of birthdays, holidays, and anniversaries.[252] These celebrations organize our time by

249. Willimon, *The Service of God: How Worship and Ethics are Related*, 105.

250. Willimon, *The Service of God,* 109.

251. Willimon, *The Service of God*, 127.

252. Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough: Worship of God in Liturgy and Sacrament,* 133.

telling stories, and ultimately the one story, that are an important aspect of our lives. In a similar fashion, liturgical seasons reorganize time, pointing our hearts towards God's kingdom. They are a reminder that we relate to time differently than non-worshipers. Ultimately, these seasons are a reminder that our identity is found in a kingdom whose understanding of time is different from this world. Webber writes: "We are in the process of rediscovering that observing the church year forms us after the image of Christ."[253] The Christian concept of time is built around the central event of Jesus' incarnation, death, and resurrection and all other times and events find their meaning in that central event.[254] When we observe the liturgical seasons of the church, time is redefined as it is aligned with the living, dying, rising and coming of Jesus.[255] Just like the four chapters of weekly worship are a weekly enactment of the gospel, liturgical time is also nothing more than the church living out the gospel story throughout the course of the year.[256] There is a looking back to past events significant to the Christian faith and a looking forward to the future day when God's kingdom will fully arrive and our transformation into his image will be fully completed. The liturgical year keeps the gospel story before us in a way that as we live through the year, we not only hear the story but we also enact it until it becomes our story.[257] Liturgical seasons place us in the story of God as our bodies are engaged in the liturgies of worship,

253. Robert E. Webber, *The Majestic Tapestry* (Nashville: Nelson, 1986), 100.

254. Webber, *Worship Old & New*, 219.

255. Webber, *The Majestic Tapestry*, 95.

256. Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough: Worship of God in Liturgy and Sacrament,* 133.

257. Willimon, *The Service of God: How Worship and Ethics are Related*, 70.

forming habits that then aim our loves at God and his kingdom. As the gospel story is enacted by the church, the gospel story becomes the life and story of the church.[258]

The worship of the early church was centered around sacred rhythms. These rhythms were both micro and macro in nature. Micro-rhythms were expressed in the structure of fixed hour prayer each day. The micro-structuring of time through the practice of fixed hour prayer will be addressed in a following section on daily counterliturgies.

Another micro-structuring of the gospel is witnessed in the four chapters of the church's weekly worship service. While fixed hour prayer is a daily reenactment of the gospel, the church's worship service is a weekly reenactment of the gospel. These micro-rhythms pointed people back to the gospel as they were a retelling of the gospel. However, the macro-rhythm, or big picture time-keeping method, is reflected in the church's liturgical year, a yearly reenactment of the gospel. The liturgical year is a twelve-month long practice in which the church walks through the gospel story. The church's liturgical calendar recognizes that human beings created in the image of God are rhythmic creatures who must keep coming back to foundational truths to anchor their lives and identities in the kingdom story.

The impact of this transformational practice is powerful. In fact, the dangers of not engaging this embodied practice may include a truncated life resulting in a truncated identity.[259] Some of this is due to the secular influence on time.[260] Due to the cultural liturgies of American timekeeping, we tend to structure our time according to consumer-driven holidays. For example, the reason Americans know Christmas is approaching is due, in part, to the sudden appearance of

258. Cavaletti, Coulter, and Coulter, *The Religious Potential of the Child: Experiencing Scripture and Liturgy with Young Children*, 63, 147.

259. Willimon, *The Service of God: How Worship and Ethics are Related*, 70.

260. Webber, *The Majestic Tapestry,* 98.

Christmas advertisements and Christmas displays in stores. This is true of Valentine's Day, Easter and Halloween. In fact, this is true of all major consumer-driven holidays. Americans structure time around these key consumer holidays and this subconsciously aims our hearts, thus altering our identities. The church's calendar year is no different when it comes to the forming of our identities. However, it differs from any other calendar in that through its calendar, we enact the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Christ.[261] The celebration of the church year is a way to organize time under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, offering an identity-shaping counterliturgy to the identity-shaping power of secular time. This stresses the importance of living under a different reality of time.[262]

The following is a brief overview of the church's liturgical year and the colors used by the church to orient its people to the season of the church, helping to engage human senses in ways that mere words cannot.[263] Refer to Figure 2 for a visual of the liturgical seasons of the church.[264]

The season of Advent

The church year begins with the season of Advent. Advent begins four weeks before Christmas Day and is a time of hope, expressed through expectation and longing for the

261. F. A. Mcgowan, "The Liturgical Year" 10, no. 118 (1956): pp. 436-444, http://www.jstor.org.dtl.idm.oclc.org/stable/43704819.

262. Webber, *The Majestic Tapestry,* 98.

263. "Signs and Symbols | Frequently Asked Questions," Presbyterian Mission Agency, 2018, https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/worship/faq/faq-signssymbols/.

264. Figure 2 was taken and adapted from page 95 of Robert Webber's Book "The Majestic Tapestry: How the Power of Early Christian Tradition Can Enrich Contemporary Faith."

Figure 2: Liturgical Seasons of the Church

Messiah.[265] Essentially, it is a time of waiting in preparation for the arrival of Jesus on earth.[266] Because Advent marks the beginning of the liturgical year, each year at Advent, the sacred story is told yet again and the church commits anew to soaking itself in "the narrative cycle that is the source of its identity."[267] Although colors were a later addition to the liturgical worship of the early church, they enhance the practice, engaging the sense of sight in this rhythmic and embodied practice. The color generally used for Advent is purple, which symbolizes penitence and preparation.[268]

The Season of Christmas: Liturgical Time as a Counterliturgy of Communal Weekly Worship

The second season of the church, a short season consisting of Christmas day and the following two Sundays, is Christmas which begins on December 25 and ends on January 6.[269] Simply put, Christmas is a time of celebrating the Messiah and the goodness of God in sending Jesus. The color used during the Christmas season is white, or sometimes gold, as these colors symbolize days or seasons of joy and mark pivotal events in Jesus' life.[270]

The season of Epiphany

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265. Glen Baaten, "Church Seasons: The Liturgical Seasons of the Church Year," First Presbyterian Church, Harrison Ohio, accessed March 24, 2019, http://www.harrisonpresbyterian.com/worship-services/how-we-worship/church-seasons.

266. Pat Meek, "Pastor's Corner | Northminster Presbyterian Church," Pastors Corner Northminster Presbyterian Church, accessed March 24, 2019, http://www.amesnpc.org/pastors-corner/2013/04/04/presbyterian-colors-of-the-church-seasons/.

267. O'Day, Gail,R. "Back to the Future: The Eschatological Vision of Advent." Interpretation 62, no. 4 (10, 2008): 357-370,356. http://dtl.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/docview/202734542?accountid=10143.

268. "Signs and Symbols | Frequently Asked Questions," Presbyterian Mission Agency (PCUSA, 2019), https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/worship/faq/faq-signssymbols/.

269. Webber, *The Majestic Tapestry,* 96.

270. "Signs and Symbols | Frequently Asked Questions," Presbyterian Mission Agency (PCUSA, 2019), https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/worship/faq/faq-signssymbols/.

Epiphany, which occurs after the twelve days of Christmas, marks the end of the Christmas season.[271] Epiphany literally means “manifestation” and is a day for celebrating God’s manifestation of himself to all people through Jesus Christ. The emphasis for worship is on the many ways Jesus was manifested to the world as the incarnate son of God.[272] It should come as no surprise that the symbolism of light is important during Epiphany as it relates to God's revelation of himself through Jesus, the light of the world, who dispels the darkness of the dominion of evil.[273]

The season of ordinary time

"Ordinary time" begins the day after Epiphany, January 7, and continues through the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. “Ordinary time” is not ordinary in the sense of commonplace, plain, boring, or monotonous; this understanding of “ordinary” is not fitting for any season of the church celebrating and worshiping Jesus.[274] During ordinary time, time is ordinary in contrast to the extraordinary liturgical seasons of time celebrating the intense.[275] The ordinary nature of liturgical time has to do with the church and what the church ordinarily celebrates on a day-to-day basis when it does not find itself in a specific liturgical season: the resurrection of Jesus and the unfolding of God's new creation as his kingdom invades this earth.[276] Lutheran theologian

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271. Webber, *The Majestic Tapestry,* 96.

272. Webber, *Worship Old & New,* 224.

273. Webber, *The Majestic Tapestry,* 96.

274. Maxwell E. Johnson, “Celebrating the Mystery of Christ in All Its Fullness,” Lutheran Liturgical Theology in Ecumenical Conversation (Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, 2015), pp. 135-162, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt12878f2.10.

275. Webber, *The Majestic Tapestry,* 97.

276. Mark Scott, ed., “What Is Ordinary Time?,” Saint Stephen Presbyterian Church, accessed March 24, 2019, https://www.ststephenpresbyterian.com/what-is-ordinary-time/.

Maxwell Johnson refers to the "theology of the season of 'Ordinary Time'" as the same as "the theology of Sunday, the Lord's Day," meaning that on every Sunday during ordinary time, we celebrate and encounter the presence of the crucified and risen Jesus, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.[277] During the ordinary seasons of time after Epiphany, the church often celebrates the beginning of Jesus' ministry, including his baptism, early miracles, and ministry in Judea.[278] Ordinary time is a represented by the color green.

The season of Lent

Lent, the next liturgical season, begins on Ash Wednesday, six weeks prior to Easter, and is a time of preparation for the major events of the Christian understanding of time.[279] During Lent, there is a strong emphasis on self-examination, contemplation, repentance, and renewal with the ultimate goal of preparation. A dominant theme is the acknowledgment of sin and the need for salvation. Like Advent, the color for Lent is purple, symbolizing penitence and preparation. The ultimate focus of this season is anticipating and preparing for the celebration of Jesus' death and resurrection.[280] The official conclusion of Lent is the celebration of the resurrection when the minister cries out "Christ is risen" and the people respond "He is risen indeed. Hallelujah."[281]

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277. Johnson, "Celebrating the Mystery of Christ in All Its Fullness," Lutheran Liturgical Theology in Ecumenical Conversation (Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, 2015), pp. 135-162.

278. Webber, *The Majestic Tapestry,* 97.

279. Webber, *Worship Old & New,* 224.

280. "The Christian Year | Worship," Presbyterian Mission Agency (Presbyterian Church (USA): Presbyterian Mission), accessed March 24, 2019, https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/worship/christianyear/.

281. Webber, *Worship Old & New,* 224.

The season of Holy Week

Holy week begins on Palm Sunday, the Sunday preceding Easter Sunday and includes services of worship centering around the triumphal entry on Palm Sunday, the Last Supper, the suffering of Jesus on Thursday, his death on Friday, ending with his resurrection, which signals the beginning of the Easter season.[282] The ultimate goal of the liturgical celebration of holy week is for the church to enact the life of Christ thus making it real for the worshiper.[283] The Thursday of Holy Week, Maundy Thursday, is the beginning of the Three Days, or Triduum, and it commemorates the new commandment that Jesus gave his followers as he taught them how to love one another when he washed their feet as a servant.[284] Good Friday, the last Friday of Lent and the second of the Three Days, is a time when the church remembers the death of Jesus on the cross. Up until Good Friday, the color of Lent is purple as stated above. After the Maundy Thursday service, the color changes to black, symbolic of the death of Christ on the cross, and thus his absence. The third day of the Three Days (or Triduum) is Easter Sunday which proclaims God's victory over sin and death through Jesus' resurrection. It is important to note here that the liturgy for the Three Days proclaims one dramatic story in three acts. The events of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday are best understood as one service, told over the course of three days. This celebration is ultimately at the heart of the Christian liturgical year, and through it we are immersed in the reality of Jesus' death and resurrection as the gospel story

282. Webber, *The Majestic Tapestry,* 97.

283. Webber, *Worship Old & New,* 224-225.

284. "Maundy Thursday | The Christian Year," Presbyterian Mission Agency (Presbyterian Church (USA): Presbyterian Mission), accessed March 24, 2019, https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/worship/christianyear/maundy-thursday/.

of God's saving love seeps into our bones.[285] The liturgy for the Three Days, and more specifically the third day of Easter, signals the end of Lent and the beginning of the Easter season. The Triduum is a transitional state, or liminal period, serving as a doorway between two seasons. It is through the suffering and sorrow of Jesus's death that we are able to enter into God's promise of everlasting life and experience an ever – deepening connection with God and an ever-increasing reflection of God.[286]

The season of Easter

Easter Sunday is the official beginning of the liturgical season of Easter and is a seven-week celebration of the resurrection. The colors white or gold are used to symbolize this extraordinary celebration.[287] These weeks are marked by the joy and celebration of the resurrection and last 50 days, ending at the day of Pentecost.[288]

The day of Pentecost

Pentecost is a one-day celebration commemorating the coming of the Holy Spirit whom God gave to empower his people to be witnesses to the resurrection. (Acts 2:1-41).[289] This season is associated with the beginning of the early church.[290]

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285. "The Three Days or Triduum | The Christian Year," Presbyterian Mission Agency (Presbyterian Church (USA): Presbyterian Mission), accessed March 24, 2019, https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/worship/christianyear/three-days-or-triduum/.

286. "The Three Days or Triduum | The Christian Year," Presbyterian Mission Agency (Presbyterian Church (USA): Presbyterian Mission.

287. Webber, *The Majestic Tapestry,* 97.

288. Webber, *The Majestic Tapestry,* 97.

289. Joshua Steele, "The Church Calendar: A Rookie Anglican Guide to the Liturgical Year," Anglican Pastor, February 18, 2019, http://anglicanpastor.com/what-time-is-it-an-overview-of-the-church-calendar-and-liturgical-year/.

290. Webber, *Worship Old & New,* 225.

The season of ordinary time

An extended period of "ordinary" time commences the Monday after Pentecost which is the longest season of the church calendar having 27 or 28 Sundays, lasting until Advent. The emphasis during this season is on the growth of the early church and the power of the Holy Spirit expressed through the ministry of the apostles and the composition of the New Testament.[291]

Conclusion to liturgical time

Catholic theologian McGowan rightly highlights the identity-shaping power of the liturgical year by pointing out the two purposes of the liturgical year as the glorification of God and the sanctification, or hallowing, of the Christian.[292] This is further evidence that the practice of liturgical time results in an ever-deepening connection with God and ever-increasing reflection of God, thus leading to God's intended identity of the image of God in his people. This is supported by Catholic theologian's Patrick C. Chibuko's powerful insight that the liturgical year is not to be confused with the fatalism of an unending return of the seasons as it is a process of progressive transformation in Christ. He writes, the church year "is instead a time that repeats itself like a spiral progressing toward the Parousia. The repetitions of the celebrations, year after year, offers the Church an opportunity to have continuous and uninterrupted contact with the mysteries of the Lord. Like a path that goes around and up a mountain, slowly making ascent to the height, we are to climb the same road at a higher level, and go on until we reach the end, Christ Himself."[293]

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291. Webber, *Worship Old & New,* 225.

292. McGowan, "The Liturgical Year," 436-444.

293. Patrick Chukwudezie Chibuko, "Liturgical Seasons: a Case of Christmastide," *Afer*52, no. 2-3 (June 2010): pp. 119-131, http://proxy.gordonconwell.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0001781745&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Conclusion to the Counterliturgies of Communal Weekly Worship

The importance of submitting to the weekly communal counterliturgy of the church should be more than evident at this time. Through these liturgies of the kingdom, we are habituated such that these habits aim our loves toward God and his kingdom which we then reflect as our identity. Communal weekly worship and its counterliturgies are the primary way God deepens our connection with him and increases our reflection of him, thus transforming us into his image. However, God also uses the everyday liturgies of our lives that flow out of the Liturgy that is our communal weekly worship. It is to these liturgies that we now turn.

Action 5: Submit to the Counterliturgies of Daily Worship

Daily counterliturgies are disciplined practices and, like communal weekly worship, the goal of these practices is to instill habits which aim our loves in the direction of God and his kingdom, ultimately forming us into his image.

Key Truths Regarding the Counterliturgies of Daily Worship

As we transition from Sunday worship to daily worship, there are a few key truths which the Christian must keep in mind. Following are those key truths every believer must keep in mind as they engage in the Christian practices of daily worship.

Key truth #1: Christian practices flow out of weekly worship

The counterliturgies of daily worship are practices which are an extension of the communal weekly worship. These are the practices that happen in the day-in and day-out of regular life. They are done in the public realm, at work, and at home.[294] However, these practices are not an end in and of themselves. The counterliturgies of daily worship do not replace the

294. Bass and Richter, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People, 2nd Edition,* xxv.

counterliturgies of weekly worship, they supplement them. Both are required for growth into the image of God. The liturgical practices of weekly worship push us into the liturgical practices of daily worship, and the liturgical practices of daily worship consummate in the liturgical practices of weekly worship. In Sunday worship, we get a glimpse of how life is supposed to be and in our daily practices, we weave this reality into our everyday lives.[295]

Key truth #2: Christian practices are rooted in tradition

Christian practices are historical. They are rooted in the ancient traditions of the Christian faith. Unfortunately, the Christian faith tends to take on the shape of the culture in which it exists. This is especially true when God's people are unaware of the power of culture to influence their faith. This means that the church, like western culture, gets caught up in looking forward to what is new and exciting instead of looking back at the historical disciplines of faith that have shaped the church over the past 2000 years. While there is nothing wrong with discerning utilization of the new and exciting, we cannot throw out what is older and may be misunderstood as unexciting. Counterliturgies of daily worship are practices that have been shaped by the church over centuries in response to God.[296] These ancient gifts of grace are practices inherited from Christians who have gone before us and God uses them to aim our loves towards his kingdom, ultimately leading to our transformation into the image of his son.[297] As we engage in these practices, we take our place within the tradition of the communion of saints.[298]

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295. Bennett, *Practices of Love: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life of the World,* 174.

296. Bass and Richter, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People, 2nd Edition,* xxvii.

297. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit,* 148.

298. Smith and Smith, *Teaching and Christian Practices: Reshaping Faith and Learning,* 30.

Key truth #3: Christian practices are communal

It should come as no surprise that the counterliturgies of daily worship are communal. These practices are not about an individual pilgrimage reaffirming the autonomous self. Although we may practice some of these liturgies while we are alone, we always practice them in the context of those who have gone before us (the historical Christian church), those who are around us (the Christian church today and more specifically, our local community of faith), and those who will come after us (the Christians who will be here long after we die). Christianity is not an individual activity, rather it is a communal practice.

Key truth #4: Christian practices are embodied

Counterliturgies of daily worship are embodied practices. These practices are no different from the liturgies of communal weekly worship in this sense. The regular submission of our bodies to these liturgies results in the formation of habits that become second nature. As we have seen, these habits then aim our desires towards the telos of God and his kingdom thus shaping our identities. We must keep in mind that these practices are grounded in daily life experience through the deployment of our bodies.[299] Being a Christian is much more than having knowledge about abstract ideas, it is also about engaging in concrete, specific, embodied practices.[300] The reality of these embodied practices is captured powerfully in the words of Dorothy Bass: "practices live in the bodies, hands, feet, eyes and compassion of real people and learning practices means doing them not just once but many times.[301]

299. Bass and Richter., *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People, 2nd Edition,* 205.

300. Bennett, *Practices of Love: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life of the World,* 29.

301. Bass and Richter, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People, 2nd Edition,* 9.

Key truth #5: Christian practices are mutually interdependent

The counterliturgies of daily worship are interrelated. Dykstra insightfully points out that the life of Christian faith is the "practice of many practices."[302] While the practices themselves are different enough to talk about individually, they also ultimately blend together as the goal of every practice is the same: an ever – deepening connection with God leading to an ever – increasing reflection of God.[303] Therefore, a Christian may begin with one specific practice and eventually find themselves practicing a different practice.[304] The interrelated nature of these disciplines is evident in Dorothy Bass' powerful statement, "to engage in only one practice without the other, is a way of death, not life."[305] All of this highlights the importance of exposing Christians to a multitude of various counterliturgies of daily worship.

Key truth # 6: Christian practices are about God's work in us

Next, these practices put us in a place of receptivity to the Holy Spirit's work of transforming us into the image of God. It is of utmost importance for us to keep in mind that we are not transformed by the work of spiritual practices. The counterliturgies of daily worship are "not just something we do, they become arenas in which something is done to us, in us, and through us that we could not of ourselves do."[306] The counterliturgies are gifts of grace. Through these practices, we receive the gift of an ever– deepening connection with God and an ever – increasing reflection of God. These practices are not about us saving ourselves nor are they about

302. Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices,* 67.

303. Bass and Richter, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People, 2nd Edition,* 9.

304. Bass and Richter, *Practicing Our Faith,* 11.

305. Bass and Richter, *Practicing Our Faith,* 194.

306. Bass and Richter, *Practicing Our Faith,* 15.

us saving the world.[307] While these practices are something we do, the most important element is the work God does in us through them as it is through these practices that we are conformed to the image of God's son by God's power. Dykstra calls Christian practices "habitations of the Spirit," as they are places where we meet with God and the power of his Spirit is experienced.[308] Hansen describes Christian practices like firewood in a fireplace. The firewood needs the fire of the Spirit of God because the firewood cannot in and of itself ignite a warming flame. However, without the fuel of the firewood there can be no fire. That is what Christian practices are: fuel waiting to be ignited by the Spirit of God.[309]

Key truth #7: Christian practices are learned by practice

Western culture tends to view education in light of consumerism: one grows in knowledge as a result of the consumption of information. This is not the way of Christian education. It is through the counterliturgies of worship that we learn the new way of life God calls us to.[310] We cannot engage the church as consumers of Christianity as we are first and foremost practitioners of Christianity. It is through participation in Christian practices that we become "educated" because the best way to learn a practice is through the act of practicing. In this way, it is no different than playing a sport. You learn hockey by playing hockey. You can watch hockey games to learn about the sport but you must eventually practice. It takes repeated and regular practice to learn the particular skills involved in playing hockey. The only way to get

307. Bennett, *Practices of Love: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life of the World,* 171.

308. Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices,* 66.

309. Collin Hansen, ed., *The New City Catechism Devotional: God's Truth for Our Hearts and Minds* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2017), 13.

310. Smith and. Smith, *Teaching and Christian Practices: Reshaping Faith and Learning,* 85.

better is through the act of habitual practice.[311] This is no different for the Christian faith. The pathway to growth in the Christian life is twofold: through the habitual practices of the weekly worship service and through the habitual practices of daily worship. A lack of practice leads to a lack of growth. As practitioners, we must practice.

Key truth #8: Christian practices require coaching

An important aspect of theological education for emerging generations should be coaching in Christian practices. Just as learning a sport like hockey is greatly aided by good coaching, the same is true for learning Christian practices. We need others who are competent in these practices to be models, mentors, teachers and partners in practice.[312] Our tendency is to view theological education as a cognitive activity. The cognitive element is just one aspect of educating young people in the faith. As leaders, we must also serve as coaches who walk alongside people in the midst of Christian practices all the while encouraging, correcting, and reflecting with them on their experience of these practices. This means we as leaders must be experienced enough in the practices of daily worship so we can include others as we practice with the goal of coaching them. We must take increasing personal responsibility for initiating, pursuing, and sustaining these practices all while including and guiding others in them.[313]

Key truth #9: Christian practices can become corrupted

The counterliturgies of daily worship can become corrupted. It is vital to keep in mind the overall purpose of the counterliturgies of daily worship: the image of God formed the people of

311. Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices,,* 71.

312. Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith,* 71-72.

313. Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith,* 73.

God. There is consistency to God's story and the life he intends his people to live; everything is connected and there is only one plan.[314] It is through these practices, or gifts of grace, that God brings about his intentions for us. Additionally, this transformation is holistic. Spiritual formation is not just one aspect or component of our lives. "Spiritual formation forms all aspects of our lives into the image of Christ."[315] These practices become corrupted when they are divorced from God's ultimate goal for us. Because of this, it is important for us to regularly reflect on the practices in which we are engaged to ensure they are lined up with God's ultimate goal for us.[316] This means it is important to combine the rhythm of practices with reflection on those practices.[317] When these practices become about anything other than the formation of God's image in us expressed in an ever –deepening connection with God and an ever – increasing reflection of God, our counterliturgies of daily worship must be changed.

Key truth #10: Christian practices are a way of life

The practices of faith result in a new kind of life.[318] The point and purpose of every practice is to forge a new way of living resulting in the transformation of God's people into his image.[319] These "ordinary" activities which are practiced in public, at work, or in the home, have long-ranging extraordinary results. This new way of living is none other than the life of Christ

314. Bennett, *Practices of Love: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life of the World,* 26.

315. Bennett, *Practices of Love,* 25.

316. Bass and Richter, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People, 2nd Edition,* 205.

317. Smith and. Smith, *Teaching and Christian Practices: Reshaping Faith and Learning,* 41.

318. Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices,* 19.

319. Bass and Richter, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People, 2nd Edition,* xiii.

being formed in God's people as their connection with him deepens and their reflection of him increases. This new way of life happens over a lifetime of spiritual practices.

There is both a vertical and horizontal dimension of these practices. Bennett aptly points out that more often than not the horizontal dimension of Christian practices is overlooked and often forgotten.[320] We intuitively know that Christian practices will have a positive impact on our relationship with God (i.e.., the vertical dimension). What we often fail to realize is that Christian practices should also have a positive impact on our relationship with others (i.e., the horizontal dimension). As we practice the Christian faith, God habituate our loves towards his kingdom which includes both our relationship with him and our relationship with others. Thus, this way of life will result in a deeper love for God (an ever – deepening connection with God) and a greater love for our neighbor (an ever – increasing reflection of God). We cannot focus on one at the expense of the other as they are both intimately connected.

Primary Counterliturgies Of Daily Worship

Bass points out that there are two practices which run through all the others: practices of the word and practices of prayer.[321] We will begin with these two primary sets of practices, starting with the practices of God's Word.

Primary practice #1: practices of the Word

Introduction. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 reveals the purpose of scripture in the life of the Christian: "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for

320. Bennett, *Practices of Love: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life of the World,* 13.

321. Bass and Richter, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People, 2nd Edition,* 194.

every good work." The Bible is useful and profitable for the teaching and training in righteousness thus the Bible is crucial in developing a deeper connection with God and a greater reflection of God. God uses scripture to transform us into his image.[322]

First and foremost, the Bible is a powerful force in the life of the church. Oftentimes, we see the Bible as a book we read, an object upon which we act. However, the Bible performs actions on us when it is read, told, heard, and remembered. It is "a living force and an active agent," acting upon us and bringing about God's intended transformation in our lives.[323]

The Bible's power, in part, comes from the fact that it is more than just a book to be read. In fact, the Bible is a recipe intended to produce something. The Bible contains much more than words for understanding, it also contains life-giving words to be performed. One of the primary methods of Christian interpretation of scripture is the performance, or practice, of the Biblical text.[324] Our powerful encounter with scripture as a living force happens when the Holy Spirit meets us powerfully in the midst of our performance of the Bible text.

Furthermore, the Bible tells the kingdom story which becomes our story through the daily counterliturgies of the word. The Bible's reality becomes our reality. The Bible's promises become our promises. The identity of the image of God unveiled in scripture becomes our identity. Through the practices of the word, God's people come to know God's story, and by knowing his story, they find themselves written into the script of that story.[325] As we are written

322. Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices,* 155.

323. Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith,* 58, 151.

324. Bolsinger, *It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian: How the Community of God Transforms Lives,* 114-115.

325. Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices,* 60.

into God's kingdom story, the result is a new pattern of living where we start to become what God intended.[326]

Due to the plethora of Biblical practices, the following list of practices is not exhaustive. This list will help to begin the discussion about the manifold practices of the word. Additional resources are listed in Appendix E.

Specific practices of God's Word

Daily Bible reading. Daily Bible reading is important for both the Christian's immersion into the story of God and the Christian's practice, or performance, of the Biblical text. In order to understand one's place in the kingdom story, one must be familiar with that story. There are a number of ways to involve the local community of faith in the practice of daily Bible reading. A great practice for the daily reading of scripture as a church community is to adopt one of the many daily Bible reading plans found at bible.com or in the corresponding Bible app.[327] Through the website and app, you can read the daily passages in your Bible, on your computer or on your iPad/iPhone. Additionally, you can listen to the passage being read in many of the different Bible versions. As the church reads together, Christians can then engage in both dialogue and practice of the biblical text, learning from one another. All it takes is a leader who understands the transforming power of this daily counterliturgy to lead the congregation in this daily practice. Another option for a daily reading plan is to commit as a church to read through the lectionary as it also provides a reading program that the entire congregation can follow.[328]

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326. Bolsinger, *It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian: How the Community of God Transforms Lives,* 121.

327. The Bible app can be downloaded for iPhones through iTunes at https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/bible/id282935706?mt=8 or for androids at https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.sirma.mobile.bible.android&hl=en_US.

328. Bolsinger, *It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian: How the Community of God Transforms Lives,* 133.

The "Life Journal" is a tool which follows a set daily reading plan found at bible.com and the Bible app but also includes another practice, the practice of journaling. Wayne Cordeiro, the pastor who created this resource, walks through this discipline in his book "The Divine Mentor: Growing Your Faith as You Sit at the Feet of the Savior."[329] It is a modified form of the Lectio Divina. After the set reading each day, people are encouraged to respond in their journals in four specific steps, indicated by the acronym SOAP, which stands for scripture, observation, application and prayer. During the scripture step, you write down one or two specific scripture verses from the daily reading that specifically spoke to you that day. The second step is observation where you write out specific observations about the passages you wrote down in the previous step. The ultimate goal is to understand what God is revealing in those specific verses. The third step is application where you respond to what you read by journaling what you think God is calling you to do in response to what you learned in steps one and two. The final step is responding in prayer to what God revealed to you through the practice of reading and journaling. It can be a simple prayer of praise or thanksgiving, or it can include asking God for his help to practice the Biblical text. The power of this practice is amplified when it is done in community.

Meditation. The various practices of meditation on the Bible are also practices of God's Word. Meditative practices focus on a deeper living reading of the text which utilizes the joy of discovery under the influence of the Holy Spirit.[330] There are numerous ways to encourage meditation on a Biblical text. It can be something as simple as posing questions without providing answers. For children, small wooden figures can be used to represent characters in a

329. Wayne Cordeiro, *The Divine Mentor: Growing Your Faith as You Sit at the Feet of the Savior* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2007).

330. Cavaletti, Coulter, and Coulter, *The Religious Potential of the Child: Experiencing Scripture and Liturgy with Young Children*, 66.

parable which kids can tactilely move around when the parable is read or reread. In doing this, they can hear scripture while constructing the scene with concrete objects.[331] Ignatian Deep Reflection and the Valsteras Method are two other meditative practices.[332]

The practice of Ignatian deep reflection begins by choosing a scene from one of Gospels. Then you imagine yourself in that scene as an actively engaged participant as opposed to a passive spectator. The goal for Ignatius was to move our thinking out of our minds and into our imaginations so as to capture our hearts so they can be aimed at God's kingdom.[333] This can be done by imagining you are one of the characters in the story or by crafting a new character which you place in the story. Then you focus on Jesus by choosing a sentence from that story to dwell on as you rest in his presence. The goal is to understand and affectively feel the truth on which you meditate.[334] If practicing with a group, which is highly encouraged, the time of meditation is concluded by sharing reflections with one another.[335]

The Valsteras Method is a way of meditating on scripture specifically designed for small groups of practitioners. It begins with one person reading the chosen passage aloud after which the individuals read the same passage silently, using specific symbols to mark up their Bibles as they read. A candle marking is used beside phrases that provide a new insight. An arrow pointing up is used by phrases that tell you about God or indicate good news. An arrow pointing down is used by phrases that highlight a need you have or a difficulty/challenge you face. A question

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331. Cavaletti, Coulter, and Coulter, *The Religious Potential*, 67, 112.

332. Both of these methods have been taken and adapted from Dorothy Bass' book "Way to Live."

333. Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, or Manresa: Explained Step-by-Step for Independent Use* (Rockford, IL: Tan Classics, 2010), 6.

334. Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 7.

335. Bass and Richter, *Way to Live: Christian Practices for Teens,* 26.

mark is used beside anything you do not understand. After a set length of time determined by the group, practitioners of the group share their markings beginning with the candle markings, followed by the arrows pointing up, then the arrows pointing down, and concluding with the question marks.[336] Ignatian deep reflection and the Valsteras method are just two examples among many meditative practices.

Catechism. The last practice of the word this section will cover is the practice of catechism. For the most part, catechism is a lost practice in today's Protestant churches. However, it is a powerful practice for immersing the Christian in God's kingdom story. Additionally, the practice of catechism is a powerful response to the Biblical illiteracy that tends to plague American churches. If we want to impart a transforming Christian faith to emerging generations, we must offer them a distinctive faith that eclipses the Moralistic Therapeutic Deism in which they are immersed. The historical catechisms of the church can do this as they were written to ensure the Christian faith kept its distinctive shape and transforming power in the face of secular liturgies.[337] In fact, Luther wrote his larger and smaller catechisms in response to the widespread lack of familiarity with the basics of the Christian faith and the failure of the clergy to adequately preach and teach the gospel.[338] Today's widespread lack of familiarity with the basics of the Christian faith calls for a reformation when it comes to catechisms.

The word catechism comes from a Greek word which means "to teach orally or to instruct by word of mouth."[339] Barnes expands on this describing the Heidelberg Catechism as a

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336. Bass and Richter, *Way to Live,* 25.

337. Lee C Barrett, tran., *The Heidelberg Catechism: a New Translation for the 21st Century* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2007), 13.

338. Barrett, *The Heidelberg Catechism,* 18-19.

339. Hansen, *The New City Catechism Devotional: God's Truth for Our Hearts and Minds*, 7.

teaching document which does not replace the Bible but is always present as "an honored teacher of the Word of God."[340] This definition applies to all key catechisms of the church as the majority of them were written in dialogical form utilizing a question and answer format. Due to the dialogical nature of catechisms, this practice is best performed in small groups or even families.[341]

The practice of catechism is effective in that it uses both repetition and memorization as catechetical participants memorize questions and corresponding answers which, as a whole, summarize the essential teachings of the Christian faith. Additionally, catechisms are usually structured in a way that reflects the grand narrative of scripture.[342] The classic catechisms take practitioners through the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer including "a perfect balance of biblical theology, practical ethics, and spiritual experience."[343] The Heidelberg Catechism contains 129 questions and answers whereas the Westminster Shorter Catechism contains 107 questions and answers. The much more recent New City Catechism, based on and adapted from Calvin's Geneva Catechism, the Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms, and especially the Heidelberg Catechism contains 52 questions and answers, one for each week of the year.[344]

Primary practice #2: practices of prayer

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340. M. Craig. Barnes, *Body & Soul: Reclaiming the Heidelberg Catechism* (Grand Rapids: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2012), 10.

341. Hansen, *The New City Catechism Devotional: God's Truth for Our Hearts and Minds*, 11.

342. For example, the Heidelberg Catechism consists of 3 sections: the misery of man (sin), the redemption of man (deliverance), the gratitude owed by man (thankfulness). The New City Catechism consists of 3 sections: God, creation in fall, law then Christ, redemption, grace and then Spirit, restoration, growing in grace.

343. Hansen, *The New City Catechism Devotional: God's Truth for Our Hearts and Minds*, 8.

344. Hansen, *The New City Catechism Devotional*, 11.

Introduction. Everyone prays. It's it doesn't matter whether you are an atheist, a Buddhist, a Hindu, or an agnostic, the reality is that everyone prays. Everyone prays because everyone is created as a desiring creature.[345] We all have longings and we often express these longings through prayer to some power, even if that power is "the universe" and involves "thinking good thoughts." There are two primary elements that make prayer "Christian." The first element is that we are directing our longings to the God of the Bible as opposed to any other god or power.[346] The second element of Christian prayer is the transformation of our desires under the reign of the king of creation. Although we pour out our hearts' desires to God in prayer, prayer is not primarily about getting something from God, but getting God himself. Prayer is about enjoying God as our great treasure and it results in an ever – deepening connection with him and an ever – increasing reflection of him.[347] Ultimately, prayer is how we open ourselves up to God's transforming power so that we can become Christian.[348] "Prayer is a daily bending of our lives towards God who has, in Jesus Christ, so graciously leaned towards us."[349]

There are many ways to pray and the following practices are by no means exhaustive. Generally speaking, there are two primary ways to pray: extemporaneous prayer and structured prayer. Evangelical Christianity tends to focus more on extemporaneous prayer. However, the following section will look at both practices as they are both essential to our transformation into

345. Bass and Richter, *Way to Live: Christian Practices for Teens,* 278.

346. Bass and Richter, *Way to Live,* 278.

347. David Mathis, *Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 95.

348. Bass and Richter, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People, 2nd Edition,* 194.

349. Willimon, Hauerwas, and Saye, *Lord, Teach Us: The Lord's Prayer & the Christian Life,* 23.

the image of God. As a reminder additional resources are listed in Appendix E. We will begin by looking at three practices of structured prayer: the Lord's prayer, fixed hour prayer, and praying the Jesus Creed. We will conclude this section on prayer by looking at two practices of extemporaneous prayer: practicing the presence of God and praying in color.

Practices of structured prayer

The Lord's Prayer. In Matthew 6, Jesus is teaching his disciples how to pray. After warning about the dangers of legalistic prayer, praying for show, and the use of unnecessary words in prayer, Jesus issues the words of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9 – 13. He introduces this prayer by commanding his followers "Pray then like this." The Lord's Prayer is a structured prayer wherein which the words we pray are given to us by Jesus. Willimon and Hauerwas call the Lord's prayer "a pledge of allegiance to the king and his kingdom that throws all our other allegiances into crisis."[350] This an apt description since prayer is a bending of our lives, and our desires, to the will of God. It is no accident that this prayer begins with a plea for the coming of God's kingdom and the enactment of God's will. Right from the outset, our human longings are placed under the umbrella of God's kingdom and will. The rest of the prayer deals with kingdom issues such as our daily needs, forgiveness, and liberation from evil. As we practice praying this prayer repetitively and habitually, it acts on us and forms us more and more into the image of God. The Lord's prayer is also a great way to practice listening to God since listening is part of the practice of prayer. In praying this prayer, we are both listening to God (since the prayer contains God's direct words to us) and talking with God. As we pray this prayer, we are transformed more closely into the image of the one to whom we pray through the redirecting of

350. Willimon, Hauerwas, and Saye, *Lord, Teach Us,* 96.

our desires towards God and his kingdom.[351] It must also be noted that this prayer practice is communal. Although we may pray it alone, we are not alone in praying this prayer. The plural "our" and "us" in the prayer is not accidental wording. The earliest Christian communities confirm that the Lord's Prayer was a crucial part of their daily practice. In fact, the Didache commands Christians to pray the prayer three times every day.[352] As we pray it today, we pray alongside of Christians all over the world who still acknowledge the transformative power of this prayer.

Fixed hour prayer. The second practice of structured prayer is fixed hour prayer, or praying the hours. Praying the hours is about building structure and rhythms of prayer into our lives.[353] Praying the hours is an ancient practice and is a different way of engaging time. This practice precedes the New Testament as it was a common practice for pious Jewish believers to stop three times each day in order to pray.[354] Daniel 6:10 informs us that Daniel did just this: he prayed at three set times throughout the day. This practice was then adopted and adapted by the early Christian church. Fixed hour prayer, along with the Lord's supper, is the oldest surviving practice of the Christian faith[355] Furthermore, fixed hour prayer is always communal in nature. Even if individuals pray alone, they still pray together with other believers throughout the world.[356] The liturgical practice of praying the hours is not only an ancient communal practice, it

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351. Willimon, Hauerwas, and Saye, *Lord, Teach Us,* 45.

352. *The Didache: The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (Books and Such, 2009) Kindle edition, chapter 8.

353. Karen E. Sloan, *Flirting with Monasticism: Finding God on Ancient Paths*(Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2006), 152.

354. Scot McKnight, *Praying with the Church: Following Jesus Daily, Hourly, Today* (Brewster: Paraclete Press, 2013), chap. 3, Kindle.

355. Phyllis Tickle, *The Divine Hours: Prayers for Autumn and Wintertime* (New York: Image Books, Doubleday, 2000), viii.

356. Tickle, *The Divine Hours*, ix.

is also a powerful tool to form us into the image of God. Whether our sacred rhythms consist of seven set times of prayer like the Benedictine monks, three set times of prayer like pious Jewish believers, or two set times of prayer as prescribed in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, the repetitive and habitual counterliturgy of communing with God through set prayers forms habits within us which take hold of our desires and point them towards God and his kingdom.[357] The end result is a deeper connection with God and an increased reflection of God as these prayers seep and soak into the very core of who we are, changing us from the inside out.

While there are many prayer books originating from different Christian traditions, these prayer books share common content. The majority of prayer books, regardless of tradition, include content from the psalms, the Lord's Prayer and other key passages of the Bible.[358] "The Divine Hours" by Phyllis Tickle is one of the most accessible and easy to use prayer books. Tickle's fixed hour prayer book has four set times of prayer each day: morning (6 to 9am), midday (11 to 2pm), vespers (5 to 8pm), and compline (before going to sleep). Each prayer session takes anywhere between five and ten minutes and consists of a similar flow. First is the call to prayer followed by the request for God's presence, a greeting where the pray-er greets God, followed by a short refrain. Next is a reading from scripture followed again by the short refrain. A scripture reading from the psalms is next which is followed yet again by the short refrain. Next is the Gloria, the Lord's Prayer, and a specific prayer appointed for that week.[359] This time of prayer is wrapped up with the concluding prayer of the church. The daily rhythms of

357. *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church* (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1979).

358. McKight, *Praying with the Church: Following Jesus Daily, Hourly, Today*, chap. 3, Kindle.

359. The Gloria is "Glory be to God the father, God the son, and God the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, so it is now and so it shall ever be, world without end. Alleluia. Amen."

praying the hours are part of the yearly rhythms of the church's liturgical calendar as the specific prayers and the scripture passages are determined and shaped by the church's liturgical calendar.[360] While the church's calendar places us in the gospel story year after year, we experience that story day after day as we engage in the practice of praying the hours. As a result, our identities are subsumed into the gospel – driven sacred rhythms of the church's liturgical calendar.[361]

The Jesus creed. The Jesus Creed is an adapted form of the Shema which Jewish people have recited and prayed for thousands of years. Its name comes from the first Hebrew word in Deuteronomy 6:4 which is translated "hear" in English. The Shema is both a prayer and a creed consisting of three Old Testament passages: Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:13 – 21 and Numbers 15:37 – 41. All males were required to pray the Shema twice every day.[362] In fact, it is very likely that Jesus prayed this prayer regularly as he was growing up.

In Matthew 22:36 an expert in the Law asked Jesus his opinion regarding the greatest commandment in the Law and Jesus responded by adapting the Shema for his own followers.[363] It is this adaptation, which includes the first part of the Shema from Deuteronomy 6 and a much shorter passage from Leviticus 19, which Scott McKnight calls "the Jesus Creed:" "Hear O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is One. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these."[364] McKnight points out that Jesus'

360. McKight, *Praying with the Church: Following Jesus Daily, Hourly, Today*, chap. 6, Kindle.

361. McKight, *Praying with the Church*, chap. 1, Kindle.

362. Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, Updated (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 245.

363. McKight, *Praying with the Church: Following Jesus Daily, Hourly, Today*, chap. 5, Kindle.

364. McKight, *Praying with the Church*, chap. 5, Kindle.

version of the Shema became both a creed and a prayer for his followers and the best way for the Jesus Creed to shape our thinking is through the practice of reciting this creed throughout the day.[365] It can be recited and prayed before or after we pray the Lord's Prayer, or it can even be added to the end of our fixed our prayers. However, we do not have to limit it to a specific scheduled time of prayer; the Jesus Creed can be prayed at any time during the day or night. Praying this prayer is not superstition, rather it is about living life in God's presence and centering ourselves on what is most important: our ever-deepening connection with him and our ever-increasing reflection of him. Furthermore, praying the Jesus Creed is not just an intellectual practice as we are using our bodies, our vocal chords, our facial muscles and even our lower bodies if we choose to kneel while praying, as we recite and pray truth. These liturgical embodied practices wedge themselves in our hearts, grip our desires, and point them towards the kingdom.

Practices of extemporaneous prayer

Now we turn to a few examples of extemporaneous prayer. Just as there are numerous manners of structured prayer, there are also numerous ways of extemporaneous prayer. In fact, our shallow dive into these ways of praying serves the purpose of whetting our appetites to learn more and different ways to pray. Additional resources are listed in Appendix E.

Practicing the presence of God. Practicing the presence of God is a practice of prayer that takes seriously Paul's command to "pray without ceasing" found in 1 Thessalonians 5:17. This practice comes from a book entitled "The Practice of the Presence of God" which contains material originating from a lay monk named Brother Lawrence. The primary goal of the practice

365. McKight, *Praying with the Church*, chap. 5, Kindle.

was a constant, intimate, and ongoing connection with the God where we think of nothing but God and are always aware of his presence with us. The practice itself is not first and foremost about "understanding and speech" but rather an embodied practice which has to be "maintained by the heart and by love." For Brother Lawrence, thoughts about God matter very little whereas love for God expressed through this practice is what matters most.[366] While it is a practice that takes effort and consistency to form, once it is learned it grips human desire and points our hearts directly towards God who is our "end."[367] This practice leads to an intimate connection with Jesus that captures our desires and turns our affections towards God.[368] The end result is both a deeper intimacy with God and transformation into the image of God, which brother Lawrence called "a Christian perfection."[369]

While Brother Lawrence does not specifically lay out "steps" or "actions" for this practice, these actions can be gleaned from a reading of his short book. First, Brother Lawrence acknowledges that the practice begins with a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Before anything, God has to do his saving work in our hearts. Next, Brother Lawrence advises the novice to begin by offering short phrases to God inspired by love.[370] Some of these phrases can include "Lord, I am all yours," or "God of love, I love you with all my heart," or "Lord, use me according to your will." The third step is to turn everything into a conversation with God.[371]

366. Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God* (Springdale: Whitaker House, 1982), 80-81.

367. Lawrence, *The Practice,* 69, 90.

368. Lawrence, *The Practice,* 84, 90.

369. Lawrence, *The Practice,* 83.

370. Lawrence, *The Practice,* 70.

371. Lawrence, *The Practices,* 8.

During his work, Brother Lawrence would continually talk with God as if God were right there alongside of him, offering God his services and thanking God for his assistance.[372] Whenever he considered doing a good deed, he would ask for strength. When he sinned, he immediately confessed it to God. [373] If he was troubled by something, instead of going to another person, he would share it with God and trust God to take care of it.[374] When difficulties arose, he would ask God for grace.[375] Brother Lawrence advised not to give any attention to anxiety or problems because when you're focused on God, you don't have time to focus on your anxieties and problems. When he got distracted by problems, he would simply turn his loving attention back to God.[376] If he faced danger, he would ask for God's help.[377] Simply put, everything he was confronted with, either internally or externally, he would bring it to God in prayer. The fourth action of this practice is to stop for a few minutes every now and again and praise God.[378] Brother Lawrence firmly believed it was a common mistake for Christians not to leave the cares of the world behind from time to time in order to praise God and rest in the peace and love of his presence for a few moments.

Praying in color. The second extemporaneous practice of prayer is praying in color. This practice is a unique prayer practice founded upon the truth that we are embodied creatures who

372. Lawrence, *The Practice,* 82.

373. Lawrence, *The Practice,* 11.

374. Lawrence, *The Practice,* 13.

375. Lawrence, *The Practice,* 17.

376. Lawrence, *The Practice,* 38.

377. Lawrence, *The Practice,* 46.

378. Lawrence, *The Practice,* 60.

need to "avoid the spiritual-versus-physical split between mind and body."[379] Sybil MacBeth, who wrote "Praying in Color: Drawing a New Path to God" documented how she spent most for her life praying with her brain while attempting to sit in silence, all the while her body rebelled due to its desire to move. It was this realization that led her to combine prayer and the playful practice of coloring and improvising. All you need for this practice is paper, colored markers or pencils, and a thin black, roller point pen. Furthermore, it is important to note that one does not need any artistic skill whatsoever. While the practice can take as little time or as much time as one desires, she suggests starting with 15 to 30 minutes, sitting at a table in a quiet room. Despite the amount of time we spend praying in color, MacBeth highlights that this is an all-day prayer of thanks as we carry the visual memories we create with us in our hearts, and on paper, so we can pray throughout the day. The practitioner starts the practice of praying in color by drawing a shape somewhere on the page with the black pen and writing the name of a person you want to pray for in, or near, that shape. The shape can be a triangle, a trapezoid, a squiggly line, or even an imperfect circle. There is no right or wrong shape. Next, add detail to the shape which can include dots, lines, circles, zigzags, or whatever your hand desires. As you continue to enhance the drawing, imagine each stroke as time you spend with that person in prayer. At this specific time, words are unnecessary; the act of meditatively being present with this person and focusing on them is powerful. If at any time your mind wanders, repeat that person's name to yourself as a way of returning to the prayer at hand. She suggests imagining person, or the person's face, as if you were sitting face-to-face with them in conversation. During all this time, the pray-er continues drawing until the image feels finished. All of this is done with the black pen, however now it's time to add color to the picture. It is important to choose colors that will

379. Sybil MacBeth, *Praying in Color: Drawing a New Path to God* (Brewster: Paraclete Press, 2007), 45.

stay in your memory, ones that you like, or ones that remind you of the person for whom you are praying. When the first drawing is done, move to another space on the page and draw a new shape to create a place for the name of the next person. This begins the process all over again, adding detail and color in the same manner as the first person. Next, add another person and another person, drawing with a black pen and adding colors until you have created an image for everyone you want to pray for. The goal is to let the names and images imprint themselves on your brain and ultimately your hearts. When you are done with this first step of praying in color, take the journal or the page with you and place it somewhere you will see it throughout the day. That picture of people surrounded in color is a great reminder of those individuals surrounded in the care and presence of God. Furthermore, that picture will remind you throughout the day to specifically pray for those individuals.

The second step of praying in color starts the next day when you can either add new names to your community of color or expand on the original drawing by writing specific prayer requests near a person's name. Again, it is important to take this visual with you throughout the day so you can pray for these individuals. In her book, Macbeth highlights other ways to use this prayer practice including praying scripture, asking for discernment, praying for our enemies, and worshipping God. While this specific practice of prayer is unique and may be uncomfortable for some Christians, there's something to be said for making prayer an embodied practice using the childlike act for coloring. Furthermore, it encourages empathy in believers. Through the slow process of drawing and coloring for each individual, empathy is virtually unavoidable. This kind of empathy not only provides a spark to our prayer lives, it also instills within us a kind of love

that comes only from God. MacBeth also has a book on this practice written specifically for kids.[380]

Secondary Counterliturgies of Daily Worship

Introduction to secondary counterliturgies

Secondary counterliturgies are practices other than prayer or Bible reading. While the secondary practices of daily worship are far too numerous to list here, this study will present a few broad categories, along with one or two practices which fit under each category.

Secondary counterliturgies: the practices of rest and sabbath keeping

The practice of sabbath-keeping originates from the Genesis 2:2-3 where after six days of creating the world, God rests on the seventh day, blessing it and making it holy. Israel was called to engage the practice of sabbath-keeping because God himself rested. Humans, whom God created in his image on day six, are faithful to God by resting and ceasing work on day seven, just as God rested from his work on the seventh day.[381] While we are under a new covenant today, the practice of sabbath and rest are still great practices for today. The embodied practices of sabbath and rest are a way to acknowledge we are not God and therefore need rest because our bodies, our minds, and our energy are finite. The practice of sabbath-keeping is important as the rhythm and pattern of six days of work, followed by one day of rest, is an integral theme in the Bible.[382]

380. Sybil MacBeth, *Praying in Color: Kid's Edition* (Brewster: Paraclete Press, 2009).

381. Marva J. Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting* (Grand Rapids Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1995), 45.

382. Bass and Richter, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People, 2nd Edition, 77.*

The practices of sabbath and rest are ultimately a cessation of work; we cease working for a day so we can rest, be refreshed, and worship God in community. Marva Dawn, in her book "Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting," rightly posits that the sabbath is a practice where we cease work but we also cease productivity, worry, playing God, consumerism, and the meaningless of life without God at the center.[383] Furthermore, the practice of sabbath-keeping and rest provides not only physical rest, but also spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and social rest.[384]

While the practice of sabbath keeping is a cessation of work in order to rest and worship on one day out of seven days, the practices of rest are a cessation of work in order to rest and worship in moments throughout any day of the week. Practices of rest are like mini-sabbath moments throughout the week where we cease work and worship God either individually or communally.

In our 21st century American culture, practices of rest and sabbath-keeping will be difficult at first because they are diametrically opposed to 21st century American values. Our culture imposes immense expectations on human beings. Value is found in one's work or one's money and thus importance is often established through the number on our paychecks or the status attributed to our jobs. Guilt becomes the norm due to our inability to live up to unreasonable manmade expectations. The impact of this way of life on humans is injurious emotionally, physically and spiritually because it is not the way God intended us to live on this earth as his image.

383. Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting,* 5-50.

384. Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath,* 51-98.

The practice of a mini-sabbath. It is beyond the scope of this study to go into depth about the host of examples of the practices of rest and sabbath-keeping. However, one simple practice is to schedule in a 10, 15, or 20-minute mini-sabbath into each workday at a specific appointed time, such as before lunch, before the second cup of coffee in the morning, or at three in the afternoon. These minutes are spent resting in the presence of God. This rest can include reading a small passage of scripture, praying, or going for a short walk in a location that feels refreshing. The details are not as important as creating a regular rhythm of ceasing work to rest and worship.

Secondary counterliturgies: practices of service and renewed working

The goal of these practices is the sanctification of our work and service, shifting the focus from ourselves onto God and others. Our sinful tendency is to be consumed with thinking about ourselves, thus we place a self-centered priority on working for, and serving, ourselves. Bennet points out it although it not be malicious, we can often make work about ourselves and acquiring the things we want, doing the things we find beneficial, and getting the praise and rewards we see as important.[385] At the heart of the practices of service and renewed working is the Biblical reality that all we are and all we have belongs to God, including our time, our energy, our work, our money, our hands, our feet and our goals.[386] Practices of renewed service and working are embodied practices that grip our hearts and aim our desires in the direction of God and his kingdom, thus forming our identity. These practices sanctify selfish working, making others a priority, even when it is inconvenient or undesirable.[387]

385. Bennett, *Practices of Love: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life of the World,* 131.

386. Bennett, *Practices of Love,* 143.

387. Bennett, *Practices of Love,* 142.

The practice of listening. One example of a practice of service and renewed working is the practice of listening. Listening is the practice of taking time and making effort to lean in towards another, the opening of ourselves in receptivity towards the people around us.[388] For a set length of time (three days, one week, one month) commit to a period of time each day (begin with 15, 20 or 30 minutes each day) where you will practice listening to others. This can be done either at work or at home. During this set period of time, commit to simply being present with another. The only words you can speak are questions which create even more opportunities to practice listening. These questions should not focus on your personal agenda or desires for the other person, they should be simple questions that facilitate further listening. As stated above, it is good every so often to reflect on each practice you put into action. Ask questions such as "What am I learning through this practice?" "What is enjoyable about the practice?" "What is difficult about it?" and "How is God transforming me as I continue to engage this practice?" Keep track of the answers to these, and other helpful questions over time.

Secondary counterliturgies: practices of forgiveness and reconciliation

These Christian practices build on the work of Jesus Christ in our lives. We are commanded to forgive because God forgave us. When we engage in these practices, we step into the way of life God has called us to live.[389] Not only that, it is a movement from seeing and treating a fellow person as an enemy to seeing and treating them as fellow creatures created in the image of God.[390] Since we are called to live in a committed community of faith, it is

388. Cavaletti, Coulter, and Coulter, *The Religious Potential of the Child: Experiencing Scripture and Liturgy with Young Children*, 49.

389. Bass and Richter, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People, 2nd Edition*, 132.

390. Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices*, 61.

inevitable that we will hurt each other, wrong each other and sin against each other thus requiring reconciliation. The practices of forgiveness and reconciliation are practices that lead Christians to take the risk of speaking words and taking actions in order to break the pattern of unforgiveness that can so easily exist in our lives and our churches.[391] These practices start with the willingness to speak truthfully and lovingly about conflicts that have arisen after which we must recognize our part in the conflict and then take steps to change our part in causing and perpetuating those conflicts. One of the most powerful practices of forgiveness we can engage in is the practice of worshiping together without bitterness and unforgiveness reigning in our hearts.[392]

The practice of praying for your enemies.[393] The discipline of forgiveness is not an easy practice. However, it is also not an optional practice for those of us who call ourselves Christians. In fact, in the practice of praying the Lord's Prayer, we pray "forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." One practical way to practice forgiveness is through the practice of praying for our enemies. Begin this practice by thinking of someone with whom you are angry. Be honest about your feelings towards that person, owning those feelings and, in prayer, sharing them with God. It is perfectly okay to be honest with God in prayer about your feelings as he already knows what is going on in your heart. The Bible is full of honest prayers by God's people expressing honest emotions; Psalm 3:7 is just one example of this. The next step is to refuse to speak negatively about this person to other people in his or her absence. This specific action is a smaller practice within a larger practice and it may take some time before you

391. Bass and Richter, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People, 2nd Edition,* 135.

392. Bass and Richter, *Practicing Our Faith,* 144.

393. Trevor Hudson, *Discovering Our Spiritual Identity: Practices for God's Beloved* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2010), 83. This practice has been taken and adapted from Hudson's book.

are ready to move on to the next smaller practice within this practice of forgiveness. Additionally, during this time of not speaking unkindly about this person, also commit to praying daily for God's blessing on this person. Next, when you are ready, ask God to show you a specific practical act of lovingkindness you can show this person. When you are ready, commit to performing that act of love. As with all disciplines, pay attention to the impact this practice has on your relationship with God and your relationship with the specific person you listed in this practice.

Secondary counterliturgies: practices of hospitality

Hospitality is often equated with niceness. Niceness is not an act of hospitality as hospitality is so much more. Hospitality is the physical manifestation of welcome.[394] The practice begins with providing for the basic physical needs of food and shelter but it does not stop there.[395] It is about receiving others into our homes, sharing our resources, and facilitating a space of comfort and care.[396] The practices of hospitality emerge from knowing the hospitality God has shown us along with the acknowledgement that the stranger is a person who is loved by God and who is created in his image.[397] This truth means that no one is ultimately a stranger; all humans are neighbors.[398]

Hospitality is a way of saying to another, "You matter." I welcome you and want to provide for you a safe place where you can be yourself."[399] Practically speaking, we practice

394. Bass and Richter, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People, 2nd Edition,* 29.

395. Smith and Smith, *Teaching and Christian Practices: Reshaping Faith and Learning*, 64.

396. Smith and Smith, *Teaching and Christian Practices*, 64.

397. Bass and Richter, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People, 2nd Edition,* 32-34.

398. Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices,* 96.

399. Hudson, *Discovering Our Spiritual Identity: Practices for God's,* 179.

hospitality when we ask friends, and even strangers, to share a meal with us or with our circle of friends. Also, we practice hospitality when we gracefully accept an interruption by a visitor. In a culture that values time and personal rights such as our 21st century American culture, this can be a difficult practice.

Hospitable reflection. There are many ways to practice this discipline. A beginning practice of hospitality is to commit for one day to pay close attention to how you act toward other people. Are you welcoming to everyone? Do you show kindness towards others naturally? Be brutally honest and write down what you discover throughout that day. If you find you have difficulty with this practice of hospitality, think about why you do what you do and how you might act differently. Then, turn this into a prayer where you ask God to give you a heart of hospitality and love towards both acquaintances and strangers.[400]

Invitational hospitality. Another example of a hospitality practice is to commit for one month to invite a friend or an acquaintance who is outside of your immediate circle of friends, to join your group of friends for a meal once every week. At first, this may be uncomfortable so it is be a good idea to let your friends know about your plan. Make sure to reflect after each time you practice hospitality. Ask yourself questions such as "How did I feel during this meal?" "What did I learn?" "How did the other person feel?" "What did God teach me through this practice?" Keep track of these results each time you practice the discipline of hospitality so you can learn.[401]

Secondary counterliturgies: practices of discernment

400. Bass and Richter, *Way to Live: Christian Practices for Teens*, 206. This practice was taken and adapted from this book.

401. Hudson, *Discovering Our Spiritual Identity: Practices for God's,* 180. This practice was taken and adapted from this book.

Discernment practices are those practices through which a community or an individual seeks, recognizes, and takes part in the activity of God in specific situations. While the goal is to determine God's will, these practices are not engaged for personal advancement but rather to enhance one's participation in the work of God.[402] Throughout all of the various practices of discernment, two precursory questions must be asked. The first question is "Is it consistent with the Word of God?" and the second one is "Does it build up, edify and contribute to the well-being of the church?[403] If the answer is "no" to either of these questions, the practice of discernment ceases and the issue should not move forward. Discernment is a practice which will never contradict God's word or tear down the body of Christ.[404] This is true for both communal and individual discernment practices.

Individual Discernment. One specific practice of individual discernment taken and adapted from Dorothy Bass' book is a five-step practice.[405] The first step is to become aware of as many dimensions of the decision as possible. The second step is to devote a particular period of time (a few days to several weeks) to consider the least likely side, the decision you feel least inclined to choose. This can be challenging as it goes against the American "fast food" culture of getting immediate results. The third step is to repeat this process for the same period of time with the other option you are most inclined to choose. The fourth step is to involve two or three trusted people from your community of faith to advise you and pray with you with the ultimate goal of discerning the direction that seems most harmonious with the Holy Spirit.[406] The fifth

402. Bass and Richter, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People, 2nd Edition,* 105.

403. Bass and Richter, *Practicing Our Faith,* 153.

404. Bolsinger, *It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian: How the Community of God Transforms Lives,* 152.

405. Bass and Richter, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People, 2nd Edition,* 106-108.

406. Bass and Richter, *Practicing Our Faith,* 108.

and final step is to act in the confirmed direction and set a time to follow up and reflect on the results.

Secondary counterliturgies: practices of simplicity and self-denial

The practices of simplicity and self-denial are a sanctification of malformed ways of living and consuming. Simplicity is a way of life where we choose to live within our means. This practice rejects American consumerism and includes actions of choosing to live as responsible and loving stewards of God's creation.[407] In the practice of simplicity, we love our neighbors through the rejection of selfish owning as we foster a sense of right proportion thus acknowledging the interdependence of all creation.[408] Whereas simplicity is a way of life, self-denial is a temporary refraining of consumer goods for a period of time.[409] When we practice self-denial, we practice saying no to the secular liturgies which have serious potential to crowd out God and we say yes to a way of living that creates more space for God. We do not refrain just for the sake of saying no, we refrain for the sake of saying yes to God.[410]

One practice of self-denial is the practice of fasting. Jesus assumed his followers would fast as he said "When you fast…" in Matthew 6:16 and 17.[411] Fasting was both an Old and a New Testament practice.[412] Traditionally, fasting is when an individual or a community says "no" to the consumption of food for a set period of time in order to create space to focus on God.

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407. Bennett, *Practices of Love: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life of the World*, 49-52.

408. Bass and Richter., *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People, 2nd Edition,* 55.

409. Bennett, *Practices of Love: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life of the World,* 86.

410. Bass and Richter, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People, 2nd Edition,* 60, 66.

411. Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough: Worship of God in Liturgy and Sacrament,* 141.

412. See Isaiah 58, Acts 13:2 and Acts 14:23.

However, fasting can also involve refraining from other things including, but not limited to, television, the internet, music, mobile phones, specific kinds of food, drink, or any other consumer good in our lives which either crowds out God or has the potential of crowding out God.

Consumer fasting. One specific way to practice self-denial is to choose one good you will refrain from consuming and then set a specific period of time you will engage this practice; start with one hour, one day, three days or one week. For this period of time, the goal is to say "no" to a specific consumer good so you can say "yes" to God. During the specific times you would normally consume that specific good, spend that time reading scripture or praying (either set prayers or extemporaneous prayers). When your time of self-denial through fasting is completed, take some time to reflect on what God taught you and how he changed you.

Secondary counterliturgies: Practices of solitude and silence

Solitude is stepping away from tasks, responsibilities and people to be alone. Solitude is not seclusion or vacation but rather getting away from the world repeatedly and regularly to be alone.[413] Bennet insightfully highlights both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the practice of solitude. Vertically, solitude is a practice where we create space to talk to and hear from God. Horizontally, on the other hand, it is a practice which sanctifies malformed ways of socializing as the practice in engaged out of concern for the community, acknowledging that too much or too little of our presence can hurt our neighbors. This practice of solitude is "about loving our neighbor with our shadow and our presence."[414]

413. Bennett, *Practices of Love: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life of the World,* 103-105.

414. Bennett, *Practices of Love,* 104.

Silence is a practice where we deliberately commit to not speaking for a specific period of time, in a specific situation, or for a specific reason.[415] However, the practice of silence is not just about being quiet, it is also about listening. Silence is a sanctification of malformed ways of talking so we can listen to either God or our neighbor. Talking too much and listening too little is harmful to our relationships with each other and our relationship with God. This practice creates more space for God and his work in our lives.

Practices of slowing. One of the great enemies of the practices of solitude and silence is the American propensity towards a hurried and impatient life. Hurry is an enemy to the practices of solitude and silence and therefore an enemy to our transformation into the image of God. The practices of slowing and solitude are great antidote to hurry. There are many ways to practice the discipline of slowing. If you drive a car to school or work, take a month to deliberately drive in the slow lane on the highway instead of swerving from lane to lane. Instead of trying to pass people, pray a little prayer for them as they pass you, asking God to bless them. Another discipline of slowing includes a commitment to eat food slowly at all meals for a set period of time. One week is a great place to begin. You can even force yourself to chew your food at least ten to fifteen times before each swallow. One last practice of slowing includes finding the longest line at the grocery store and getting in that line. You can even let one person go ahead of you. Commit to this practice for one month. For many of us, these practices will be difficult but they will also be powerful. As with all practices, reflection is key.[416]

Practices of solitude. The practice of solitude is incredibly important as it is the one place "where we can gain freedom from the forces of society that will otherwise relentlessly

415. Bennett, *Practices of Love,* 121.

416. John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1997), 89-96. This practice was taken and adapted from this source.

mold us."[417] So, what do you do when you practice solitude? The answer is "nothing." Solitude is mostly about not doing anything.[418] Ortberg notes that it is helpful to think about solitude in two categories: brief periods of solitude on a regular basis and longer, more extended periods of solitude practiced more infrequently.[419] If the discipline of solitude is unfamiliar to you, it is best to start by scheduling ten to fifteen minutes of solitude every day. Make sure it is on your calendar for the day and treat it like you would any other appointment. You can even set an alarm on your watch or your phone to mark when the time begins and ends. When it is time to practice solitude, remove yourself from any and all distractions. Go for a walk, sit on a bench at work or in a nearby park; you can even sit in a chair in your backyard. When distractions or worries come along, simply commit them to God in prayer and set them aside as if they are a phone call you ignore and send through to voicemail so as to deal with it later. During this time of solitude, it is important to remind yourself that one day all of your distractions, worries, tasks, and concerns will be gone – but you will still belong to Jesus.[420] As you become more comfortable practicing these brief periods of solitude, it will eventually be time to turn to longer intervals of solitude. Every so often, schedule an hour, three hours, half a day, a day, or even a few days to practice the discipline of solitude. During these extended periods of solitude, it is okay, and even preferred, to practice some of the primary disciplines of the word and prayer. However, it is important to make sure they do not become time-dependent tasks or responsibilities, but rather you spending time with the most important person in your life. Make

417. Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted*, 90.

418. Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted*, 92.

419. Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted*, 92.

420. Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted*, 92.

sure to reflect on your experience each time so you can discover what God is teaching you and how God is transforming you through the practice.

Conclusion to Chapter 3

This chapter began with an overview of three different models of Christian formation, after which we honed in on the “Person as Lover” model and took an extensive theoretical look at the five elements of this model. We discovered that cultural liturgies often unconsciously form our heart habits which then aim our ultimate desires at some kingdom of which our identities then become a reflection. We concluded that if we are going to experience transformation into the image of God, we must immerse ourselves in the counterliturgies of Christian worship as these practices are what will grab a hold of our hearts, pointing them at God and his kingdom and thus transforming us into his image. This naturally led to a practical look at the "Person as Lover" model in which we laid out five action steps Christians must take to live out this powerful model of Christian formation. The first action step is to focus on the ultimate goal of the image of God as our corporate and individual destiny. As we focus on this goal, it reminds us how important it is to commit to the four final actions, some of which will be unnatural and even undesirable. The bottom line is that the ultimate goal of transformation into the image of God is worth it. The second action is to commit to a covenant community followed by the third action of disentangling from cultural liturgies. Next came the challenge to submit to the counter liturgies of communal weekly worship after which the importance of submitting to the counterliturgies of daily worship was addressed. This last action step closed out with a brief look at some key categories of Christian practices with each category including one or two specific examples.

We now turn to the project design of this thesis.

CHAPTER 4: PROJECT DESIGN

Introduction

When this study began, I was working at a Christian camp and conference center where I was charged with creating a gap year program for recent high school graduates. However, through life's circumstances and ultimately the providence of God, I ended up taking a job at a more liturgical Presbyterian Church in the middle of this study where I currently serve as the Pastor to Emerging Generations overseeing kids, starting at birth, all the way through high school. This change allowed me to rethink the practical nature of this thesis project, specifically situating it in the context of the body of Christ. Due to this study's findings, this was a welcome change. Not only that, liturgy is important in the life of this Presbyterian Church which added to my excitement of creating a comprehensive plan for the spiritual formation of emerging generations with the ultimate goal of identity formation expressed in an ever – deepening connection to God and an ever – increasing reflection of God as they experience progressive transformation into his image. My changed context in this body of Christ along with my role as the Pastor to Emerging Generations provided the perfect setting and just the right amount of authority and responsibility to institute a holistic program aimed at the formation of emerging generations into the image of God. The scope of this study makes complete quantitative research difficult. Since we are looking at the spiritual formation of an individual from birth through high school, there is not enough time to see the program through to the end and then conduct testing. However, there are ways to conduct research within certain aspects of the program. This will become evident shortly.

This chapter on project design flows from the research of the previous chapters and is broken down into four sections. The first section lays out four crucial elements of the model. Without these elements, the model will struggle to be successful. The second section presents

the model, including an overview of the model, focusing on specific rites of passage linked to key developmental milestones in the child's and adolescent's life. These developmental milestones are both biological and spiritual in nature as it is ultimately impossible, and as we have seen undesirable, to parcel out a holistic human being into various fragments. The third section focuses on the methodology of research to be utilized at specific rites of passage linked to a specific developmental milestone. The fourth and final section will address the evaluation of the research results.

Four Key Elements of Model

We now turn to four elements of the model whose presence will determine, in large part, the success of the model. These elements include the importance of practices, the influence of leaders, the foundation of the gospel story, and assimilation into the body of Christ.

1. A Practice-Driven Model

The predominant ministry model for ministry in evangelical Christian churches today, for both emerging generations and adults, is a program – driven model. Much of this is due to the influence of Rick Warren's book "The Purpose Driven Church: Every Church is Big in God's Eyes" where he highlights what he believes are the five primary purposes of the church and then encourages the creation of programs around these five specific purposes.[1] This book was followed up by "The Purpose Driven Youth Ministry: Nine Essential Foundations for Healthy Growth" which encourages the creation of a program – driven youth ministry built on these same five purposes.[2] While this model had some positive results, it unintentionally reinforced the

1. Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Every Church Is Big in Gods Eyes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014).

2. Doug Fields and Richard Warren, *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry: 9 Essential Foundations for Healthy Growth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).

consumerism which drives western culture. While there is nothing ultimately wrong with relevant preaching and excellent music, this cannot be the primary impetus behind the weekly church service. Furthermore, this program – driven model unintentionally fails to acknowledge the reality that the Christian faith is the practice of many practices.

While the model of this project includes weekly programs for emerging generations, the focus is not solely on those programs. The weekly programs and semi-regular events are touch points for emerging generations so they can learn the gospel story, be assimilated into the church, and be trained in Christian practices. The programs are used to introduce specific practices at specific times all the while rooting them in God's kingdom story and encouraging connection to the greater church community. Ultimately, this is a practice-driven model, not a program-driven model.

2. Leaders as Examples and Apprentices

This model for ministry to emerging generations is dependent, in large part, on intentional, Spirit – led leadership. First of all, patient intentionality is key as this model will not yield immediate results providing immediate feedback. This model is about the development of emerging generations from birth through high school. This ultimately means it will take time, ultimately years, to see positive results from the institution of this model. Leaders must be patient and continue to roll out the model regardless of short – term results.

Leadership is also critical in the area of providing an example for emerging generations to follow. This model of ministry is not a program – driven model; it is a practice – driven model due to the research on which it is built. Because practices are vital to our spiritual transformation, leaders must be practitioners of Christianity and not just teachers or pastors. Leaders cannot take

people where they have never been themselves and because Christianity is the practice of many practices, it is vital for us to be practitioners. Kenda Creasy Dean, in her book "Almost Christian: What the Faith of our Teenagers is Telling the American Church" traces the spiritual apathy in emerging generations straight back to the adults in their lives.[3] Essentially, her point is that young people are following the lead of significant adults in their lives. As leaders, this should be a sobering reminder of the power of our example, for better or for worse. When we engage in the practices of the Christian faith, the result is not only our own transformation into the image of God, but we also provide an example for the next generation to follow. Additionally, we foster the ability to coach, or apprentice, young people in these practices. The importance of the leader's role as an example and coach cannot be understated: the more experienced we are at a practice, the better our example and the more able we are to take young people along with us, apprenticing them in Christian practices.

The last important aspect of leadership is the education of parents. It is important for parents to both know and be involved in the spiritual formation of their children. The more educated parents are regarding this model for ministry, the more they can be involved, partnering in the formation of their children. Part of the leader's role in apprenticing extends to the parents. If parents are becoming practitioners of the Christian faith, they are more able to coach their own children, adding to the Christian influences in their lives.

3. Immersion in the Kingdom Story

The gospel story is about the coming of the king and his kingdom and this story is not just God's story, it is also our story. Children and youth must be immersed in this kingdom story

3. Kenda Creasy. Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

day in and day out such that it becomes their story, the lens through which they view the world. In this model, this happens in a multitude of ways, including through the content and the structure of the programs, through the content and the structure of Sunday services, and through the practice of the liturgical year.

In this model, there are weekly programs for both kids and youth. These programs immerse the next generation in God's kingdom story through both their content and their structure. The content or curriculum for each program takes a big picture, yearly look at the gospel story starting with creation at the first of the year and concludes with the new creation at the end of the year. This happens year in and year out. While there is education happening regarding the curriculum's specific passage or story, that passage is always taught in the context of the kingdom story. Infants through sixth grade use "The Gospel Project" curriculum whereas junior high and high school students utilize a modified form of "The Gospel Project" curriculum.[4] The Gospel Project curriculum walks through the stories and truths of the gospel from Genesis through Revelation and is built upon the presupposition that the gospel is what changes kids' lives.

Second, the structure of each age-appropriate program also communicates the gospel story by inviting worshipers into God's kingdom story using the same four chapters as the church's weekly worship service covered in the previous chapter: gathering, listening, communing, and sending. However, the communing chapter of the weekly programs for emerging generations does not include the eucharist, as this is specifically a sacrament for the entire body of Christ practiced in the context of the counterliturgies of the weekly worship service. This four-chapter gospel structure characterizes young people through a reenactment of

4. "Christ-Centered Bible Studies and Curriculum," The Gospel Project (Lifeway Christian Resources, 2018), https://www.gospelproject.com/.

the gospel with the ultimate goal of this story becoming the script of their lives as they are transformed into the image of God. This four – act structure of the retelling of the gospel is also utilized in the planning and execution of the church's Sunday services thus utilizing repetition in this practice of the weekly enactment of the gospel.

Lastly, this characterization and reenactment of the gospel story also happens through the practice of the church's liturgical year. Words, colors, posters, and images are used in both the age-specific worship spaces and the age-specific programs telling the gospel story as the year progresses through the seasons of the church. All of these practices are meant to immerse children and youth in God's kingdom story such that it becomes their story.

4. Assimilation into the Body of Christ

The fourth and final crucial element of this model centers on assimilation into the body of Christ. This study reveals the importance of the assimilation of emerging generations into the church due to the communal nature of the imago Dei. One of the primary problems in next generation ministry models is a lack of assimilation into the church body. We have done a good job of creating programs for children and youth but these programs have isolated them in their own homogenous communities. In program-driven ministries, kids and youth attend church via age-specific programs and rarely interact with the church as a whole. The result is that seniors graduate church when they graduate high school because their church consisted solely of a youth group to which they no longer belong. The goal of this model of ministry to emerging generations is their assimilation into the whole body of Christ. There are a few specific ways this model sets the stage for assimilation for both kids and youth.

As for children, ages preschool and above attend the first ten to fifteen minutes of every Sunday worship service keeping them connected to the body of Christ. Also, one time each

month the kids lead the adults in worship by teaching them a new song with accompanying hand motions, and then leading them in the singing of that song. Furthermore, kids are present for all sacraments including all baptisms and the practice of the eucharist on the first Sunday of every month. It is important for kids to be a part of the church's practices as these practices are vital practices of faith which God uses to transform us into his image.

Junior high school students and above attend the church service and worship with the rest of the church family as Sunday programs for emerging generations run only through sixth grade. While this can be a rough transition for a young teenager, there are a few practices put in place which help facilitate this transition. Youth are encouraged to be contributing members in the body of Christ alongside adults through serving in the church as children's workers, ushers, musicians, greeters, liturgists, and prayer team members. These opportunities are presented regularly to seventh through twelfth graders. Furthermore, the second service on Sundays is designed, in part, with emerging generations in mind as it is held in our church – owned coffee shop and meets at a later time on Sunday mornings when students are more likely to be awake. Additionally, it is the Sunday service students are encouraged to attend together if their families do not attend the early service. Lastly, during the transition from sixth to seventh grade, each student is given a prayer/support team of two to three adults who regularly check in on that student and his or her parents all while regularly praying for them over the next six years.

Assimilation is also encouraged and facilitated through two other church practices. First, the church meets on Wednesday nights during the school year. We begin this time by sharing a meal together as one body and then we break up into age – specific times of learning. This time of eating together is a point of connection for emerging generations with all generations of the church. Even students who are not regular attenders of church come to this dinner and rub

shoulders with Christians of all ages. This point of connection is used as a launching point for encouraging youth to assimilate into the church. The second practice involves the rites of passage which are presented below. At significant moments in their Christian life, children and youth stand before the church as the church prays for them, accepting them into a new state and level of responsibility, all the while re-committing to their growth and transformation into the image of God. These significant transitions are powerful moments both for the church and for the child/youth and acknowledge to the communal reality of the church's identity as the image of God.

Figure 3 provides an overview of the model. The model is broken down by specific age stages. There are five age stages starting with birth to age seven and ending with ages 16 to 18 years old. Each of those age stages are marked by four practical elements.

A Model for Age-Stage Ministry

Introduction

The first element is the rite of passage the individual will experience. The majority of these rites of passage are specific, age-appropriate experiences and trainings. The second element is the specific practice of memorization encouraged at that specific age stage. Memorization is facilitated through the use of songs and embodied memorization practices which are repeated intentionally and strategically throughout the weekly programs each month. When they are ready, kids are given the opportunity to recite or sing the memorized prayers, creeds, or catechisms before a leader after which, upon successful completion, they are rewarded with a

Figure 3: Overview of Ministry Model

ten-dollar gift card and a handwritten greeting card reminding them that the most important reward they have gained is an ever – deepening connection to God and an ever – increasing reflection of God. While some leaders might consider the financial reward a bribe, this model views it as additional motivation, encouraging them to a practice which they normally would not engage and whose ultimate reward outweighs and outlasts the $10 they will spend on fleeting objects. The third and fourth elements are the primary and secondary practices to be introduced at that specific age-stage. The previous chapter defines primary practices as those Christian practices of the Bible and prayer and the secondary practices includes all the other practices. At these specific age stages, these primary and secondary practices are intentionally introduced to both the kids and the parents, and multiple opportunities will be given to practice each practice.

Birth to Seven-Year-Old Stage

This stage includes the church's nursery ministry, which is birth to age 2. While there is curriculum for this age, it is very unstructured and primarily focused on nurture and, later on, play. The ultimate goal is introducing infants and children to the reality of God's love for them. This first age stage also includes the preschool ministry, geared towards kids ages three to six.

For this specific age stage, the rite of passage or experience is baptism. While it goes beyond the scope of this study to delve into the theology of baptism, specifically infant baptism, the reality is that this model is in place in a Presbyterian Church which practices infant baptism. Not every infant is baptized, some parents wait until their children are able to decide for themselves, so this is one of the more flexible rites of passage when it comes to age. In this specific age stage, the senior pastor meets with both the child and the parents, walking them through both the biblical and practical realities of baptism broken down earlier in this study. If the child is of age to make the decision themselves, the child is asked if they want to proceed

with this sacramental practice. If the child is not of age, the parents are asked if they want to proceed with their child through this sacramental practice. The date is then set for the baptism which is held during a weekly Sunday worship service. The practice of baptism is a communal event and, as described previously, children pre-K and above are all present for the practice of baptism as they are also committing to support the faith of the baptized individual. One of the best ways to educate and inform the next generation regarding these foundational practices, is to involve them in these practices as active members of the body of Christ.

Memorization, for the most part, is a lost practice in children's and youth ministry in today's churches. However, memorization is important as it is a way of engraining truth on the heart and ultimately aiming our desires towards God and his kingdom. Furthermore, memorization is an embodied practice using not only our brains but also using our mouths, our tongues, our vocal cords, and even our bodies as we incorporate hand motions into the practice of memorization. For this specific age stage, the memorization encouraged is the Lord's Prayer. Not only are the kids practicing memorization, they are also practicing praying the Lord's Prayer. There are two primary ways memorization of the Lord's prayer is facilitated. First, they regularly hear the prayer prayed as a church during the first ten to fifteen minutes of the service before they are dismissed to the specific age-stage programs. Second, they sing the Lord's Prayer as a song a minimum of two times per month in each of their age-stage programs. Ironically, the song we use was composed by the children's ministry of Saddleback Church, Rick Warren's megachurch in Southern California.[5] Both of these practices facilitate their memorization of the

5. *Lyric Video - The Lord's Prayer*, *Saddleback Church Kid's Ministry Storefront*, 2017, https://store.saddlebackkids.com/lyric-video-the-lord-s-prayer.

Lord's prayer. When the child is ready, they inform one of their leaders and then either recite or sing the Lord's Prayer after which they are rewarded.

As stated previously, primary practices are those practices of the word and prayer. There are two primary practices introduced before age seven which include regular Bible intake from "The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name" by Sally Lloyd – Jones.[6] This Bible is an amazing tool which includes 21 key stories from the Old Testament and 23 key stories from the New Testament tying all of the stories together into the big picture context of God's kingdom story and his "Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love."[7] Every story in this children's Bible is framed within the context of God's kingdom story. Lloyd-Jones explains it this way: "There are lots of stories in the Bible, but all the stories are telling one Big Story. The Story of how God loves his children and comes to rescue them."[8] At this specific age-stage, we encourage parents to read this Bible to their children daily. This is the only age stage where children are not directly encouraged to read for themselves. This allows parents to be involved in the spiritual formation of their kids while at the same time educating some of the parents who may be unaware of the all-encompassing nature of the gospel in scripture. The primary prayer practice we introduce is the Lord's Prayer which is tied to the practice of memorization as explained above.

The secondary practice we introduce at this stage is simple meditation with figures as described by Sophia Cavelletti in her book "The Religious Potential of the Child: Experiencing

6. Sally Lloyd-Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name* (Grand Rapids: Zonderkidz, 2009).

7. Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name*, 36.

8. Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, 17.

Scripture and Liturgy with Young Children."[9] For example, while someone reads the parable of the Good Shepherd, the child, or children, move small wooden figures (the Good Shepherd, the sheep, and the sheepfold), manipulating the figures at the right time. This helps the child focus on the passage to the point that he or she will soon have the parable memorized.[10] This practice is done repeatedly with key parables, thus driving the truth of the gospel deep in the child's heart and aiming their hearts towards God and his kingdom. These key parables include, but are not limited to, the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:21-35), the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), the lost sheep, coin and son (Luke 15:1-32), the parables of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 13:36-52), the parable of the wise and foolish builder (Matthew 7: 24-27), the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20), and the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30).

Seven to Nine-Year-Old Stage

Next is the seven to nine-year-old age stage. The rite of passage for this age-stage is the Communion Workshop. This workshop is held on two consecutive Saturday mornings for one hour each. The first Saturday morning, parents join the children whereas the second Saturday morning is just for the kids. On the first Saturday morning, parents and children meet together and work through an interactive curriculum full of hands-on experiences all built on Mark 14:12-26 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-25, teaching the basic truth that when we participate in the Lord's Supper, Jesus feeds us with himself, and this results in a deepening of our connection to him and increase in our reflection of him while at the same time drawing closer to one another. This workshop has been taken and adapted from the Christian Reformed Church's Faith Formation

9. Cavalletti, Coulter, and Coulter, *The Religious Potential of the Child: Experiencing Scripture and Liturgy with Young Children*.

10. Cavalletti, Coulter, and Coulter, *The Religious Potential,* 67-68.

Ministries curriculum entitled "One Bread, One Cup, One People: An Intergenerational Event on the Lord's Supper."[11] There are three essential goals of this workshop. The first goal is for kids and their parents to know how the sacramental elements symbolize the body and blood of Christ. The second goal is to grow in fellowship with one another as they learn that in communion we celebrate our oneness with Jesus and his people. Lastly, we anticipate sharing and celebrating the Lord's Supper with our church family on the Sunday morning after the second Saturday of the workshop. While this is a brief overview of the first day of the Communion Workshop, Appendix A contains the full curriculum for the two-hour, Saturday event. On the second Saturday, we review what we learned the first Saturday and then we go to the sanctuary where the senior pastor talks to the kids as he walks through the preparation of communion while discussing its significance. After the second Saturday of the communion workshop, all kids who finish the workshop stand before the congregation and are acknowledged by the congregation as they step into a new level of faith. We close out this time by praying for the children while at the same time having the congregation commit to them in their growth in this new aspect of their faith.

The memorization commitment for the seven to nine-year-old age-stage includes the books of the Bible and the Apostles' Creed. For both practices, there are songs the kids sing two times a month. The Apostles' Creed song was written specifically for the kids' ministry at the Village Church in Texas.[12] The books of the Bible song was written by "The Bigsby Show," a

11. Annette Ediger, "One Bread, One Cup, One People: An Intergenerational Event on the Lord's Supper," Christian Reformed Church, 2015, https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/onebreadonecuponepeople.pdf.

12. The Village Church, *The Apostles' Creed*, *ITunes*, 2015, https://itunes.apple.com/us/album/the-apostles-creed-feat-randy-fuller/1031325071?i=1031325078.

ministry for children and families.[13] In addition to singing the songs strategically, each Sunday morning or Wednesday night during the weekly program, the children spend five to ten minutes in a specific embodied practice of memorization in regards to the books of the Bible or the Apostles' Creed. These practices include, but are not limited to, memorization cards, memory games, treasure hunts, and relay races. Just as with the Lord's Prayer, when the kids are ready, they inform one of their leaders and they can either recite or sing the books of the Bible and the Apostles' Creed. After successful recitation, kids are given a ten-dollar gift card and reminded yet again that the most important reward is having these truths ingrained in their hearts.

The primary practices we introduce to the seven to nine-year old children include a daily Bible reading plan which is an all-church Bible reading plan.[14] At this age, we encourage kids to read only the New Testament part of the plan. Kids are given a Bible that fits their reading abilities and encouraged to regularly read through the plan. The other primary prayer practice we introduce at this age-stage is the Apostles' Creed which is tied to the practice of memorization as explained above.

For the seven to nine-year-old age stage, the secondary practices we introduce include practices of hospitality and practices of service. The goal of these practices is to encourage children to step outside of themselves and see the needs of others. While this is developmentally a challenge, we want kids at a young age to begin thinking about others. These practices are simple and many are scheduled into the weekly programs within the curriculum.

13. "Bible Books," YouTube (The BIgsby Show, April 6, 2008), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixMvFdeo-F0.

14. This Bible reading plan can be found at https://www.blueletterbible.org/assets/pdf/dbrp/1Yr_LifeJournalPlan.pdf.

Nine to Twelve-Year-Old Stage

The nine to twelve-year-old age stage is next and the rite of passage experience is catechism. The catechism which we use is the "New City Catechism."[15] The reasoning behind using this catechism as opposed to more traditional catechisms like the Heidelberg catechism, the Westminster Shorter Catechism, or Luther's Small Catechism is fourfold. The first reason is the length of the catechism and the number of questions. The New City Catechism has 52 questions and answers as opposed to the Westminster Shorter Catechism's 107, the Heidelberg's 129, and Luther's Small Catechism's 306. The bottom line is the smaller quantity of questions make it more accessible so kids are able to memorize the entire catechism. Second, the "New City Catechism" has both an adult version and an abbreviated children's version which also makes it easier for kids to memorize the entire catechism. Third, "the New City Catechism" has published a children's curriculum kit designed specifically for children ages nine to twelve which allows us to adapt and use it so we can engage the kids in the practice of catechism.[16] Each session has a plethora of interactive and age-appropriate material which can be presented in either a 30, 45, or 75-minute class. Lastly are the additional tools available to the kids. The New City Catechism has a mobile app, a web app, devotional books, and songs for each question and answer to assist with the practice of memorization. For each question and answer, the mobile apps give you the option to display either the adult version or the children's version and include memory tools such as a flashcard like interface along with the ability to listen to that question and answer's specific song to aid in the practice of memorization. Additionally, the mobile apps include the options to

15. "The New City Catechism," New City Catechism (Crossway, 2017), http://newcitycatechism.com/.

16. Melanie Lacy, ed., *The New City Catechism Curriculum: 52 Questions & Answers for Our Hearts and Minds* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018).

read a devotional/commentary, pray a responsive prayer, and read the specific verse for each specific question and answer.[17] The web app has the exact same tools with the exception of accessibility to the songs which are available elsewhere online.[18] All of these tools assist kids with the practice of memorization. As stated previously, the catechism is broken up into three parts: questions one through twenty cover the Biblical realities of God, creation, fall, and law. Part two, questions 21 through 35, covers Christ, redemption, and grace. Part three consists of questions 36 to 52 and covers the Biblical truths of Spirit, restoration, and growth in grace.

The practice of catechism is broken down into five sessions, each consisting of five weeks. Each of those sessions is held at the same time as our 10:30am service, lasting for an hour and 10 minutes. Two questions and answers from the catechism are covered each session, with the exception of an extra question in sessions three and four. See Appendix B for a layout of those sessions, including the questions and answers covered in each session. These sessions are offered at different times throughout the year. Children are allowed to miss one out of the five classes for each session, however they are responsible to memorize the question and answer for the session they miss. Any time after each session has commenced, children inform one of their leaders they are ready and then recite the questions and answers for that specific session. They have as much time as they need to memorize and as previously stated, there are a plethora of tools for them to use. Furthermore, the questions and answers are referred to intentionally throughout our weekly programs and the songs are often used in worship. Parents are also encouraged to memorize the curriculum along with their children. There are additional tools

17. The iPhone app is available at https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/new-city-catechism/id564035762 and the Android app is available at https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.crossway.newcitycatechism.

18. The web is available at http://newcitycatechism.com/new-city-catechism/#1 and the songs are available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Te8vkOj2zU&list=PLPwoFK1MBpm4ClBAJbmfp3Lj0Z45yntcH.

created for adults including a devotional, which has entries for each question and answer.[19] See Appendix C for the informational brochure we use regarding catechism.

It should come as no surprise that the memorization practice for this age-stage is the "New City Catechism." The kids have four years to take the five sessions and memorize the questions and answers. This practice addresses one of the most significant failures of the church in recent years when it comes to young people; the church has failed to build a foundation for faith in the lives of young people. Oftentimes, young adults wander away from the church and they are ultimately not wandering away from the faith because the church did not provide them with a foundation of faith to return to after a developmentally appropriate time of doubting, questioning, and seeking. This practice of catechism gives kids a solid foundation of faith, which will last a lifetime and which they can question, doubt, and ultimately come back to as that foundation is proven true and reliable.

The first primary practices we introduce at the nine to twelve-year-old stage is the "Life Journal", which supplements daily Bible reading.[20] At this age stage, kids are encouraged to read only the New Testament portion of the daily Bible reading plan but the practice of meditation through journaling is added. The kids are allowed to choose between the "Children's Life Journal" or the adult version of the "Life Journal" and they are introduced to the four-part "SOAP" method of meditative journaling Wayne Cordeiro presents in his book "The Divine Mentor: Growing Your Faith as You Sit at the Feet of the Savior."[21] The only difference between the two journals is the design and layout of the journals. The other primary practice we introduce

19. Hansen, *The New City Catechism Devotional: God's Truth for Our Hearts and Minds*.

20. The Life Journals are purchased solely through "Life Resources" at https://www.liferesources.cc.

21. Cordeiro, *The Divine Mentor: Growing Your Faith as You Sit at the Feet of the Savior.*

at this stage is a child friendly version of fixed hour prayer. In this modified form of fixed hour prayer, we encourage kids to practice the morning and evening office. For this practice, adapted prayers from two prayer books are used. The first is “Seeking God’s Face: Praying with the Bible Through the Year” are used.[22] The second is Phyllis Tickle’s book “This Is What I Pray Today: Divine Hours Prayers For Children.”[23]

The secondary practices we introduce at this stage include practices of forgiveness and reconciliation and practices of service and renewed working. The goal of the first practice is to begin to introduce kids to the more abstract practice of forgiving others, which they are developing the ability to do more extensively. The second practice of service provides them with another way of looking at things as they approach the developmental phase of adolescent self-centeredness. These practices at this time are also designed to prepare them for the mission opportunities offered in the following stage.

13 to 16-Year-Old Stage

The next age stage is the 13 to 16-year-old age-stage and the rite of passage is confirmation. Confirmation is a 35-session course designed to take students even deeper into their faith journey. Because we are a Presbyterian church, we use a Presbyterian confirmation curriculum entitled "Professing Our Faith: A Confirmation Curriculum."[24] This curriculum is designed specifically for students ages 13 and older "to understand their baptism, their faith

22. Philip Reinders, ed., *Seeking God's Face: Praying With the Bible Through the Year* (Baker Pub Group, 2010).

23. Phyllis Tickle and Elsa Warnick, *This Is What I Pray Today: the Divine Hours Prayers for Children* (New York: Dutton Children's Books, 2007).

24. Meg Rift and Eunice McGarrahan, *Professing Our Faith: a Confirmation Curriculum* (Lexington: Congregational Ministries Publishing, a Minsitry of the General Assembly Council, Congregational Ministries Division, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2015).

commitment, and their place in the church."[25] Like "The New City Catechism," the confirmation curriculum is built around the three principal elements of the Apostle's Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer. Unlike the New City Catechism, it is designed to lead this group to a deeper level of practice and understanding based on their developmental abilities. Furthermore, this curriculum digs even deeper into the practices of baptism and the eucharist as well as Presbyterian church polity and other key spiritual practices. See Appendix D for an overview of the content and corresponding scripture for all 35 classes. Each confirmation class follows a four-chapter structure similar to the weekly church service and the weekly programs. The first chapter is the act of gathering where God calls the students together. In the second chapter we address and learn about the beliefs of the church scheduled for that specific session. The third section is the practical application section where students put into practice the content, and the fourth section is the sending chapter where God sends the students out into the world to live as those being transformed into his image. Throughout the curriculum, students are introduced and encouraged to engage in spiritual practices such as journaling, the public reading of scripture, the liturgical seasons of the church, and praying scripture. Each confirmand is given a student notebook which contains some of the liturgy, the basic truths they are learning, and a space for them to journal after each section.[26] Upon completion of confirmation, the students are presented to the church and subsequently acknowledged by the church as the students commit to become church members and the church commits to them as they enter this new phase of adult responsibility. Ultimately, this is a rite of passage into adulthood in the church. Both the church

25. Rift and McGarrahan, *Professing Our Faith,* 4.

26. Meg Rift and Eunice McGarrahan*, A Student's Notebook of Professing Our Faith: a Confirmation Curriculum* (Lexington: Congregational Ministries Publishing, a Minsitry of the General Assembly Council, Congregational Ministries Division, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2015).

and the confirmand acknowledge together that the students have crossed the threshold into a new phase of life where they have more responsibility in their role as members of the covenant community.

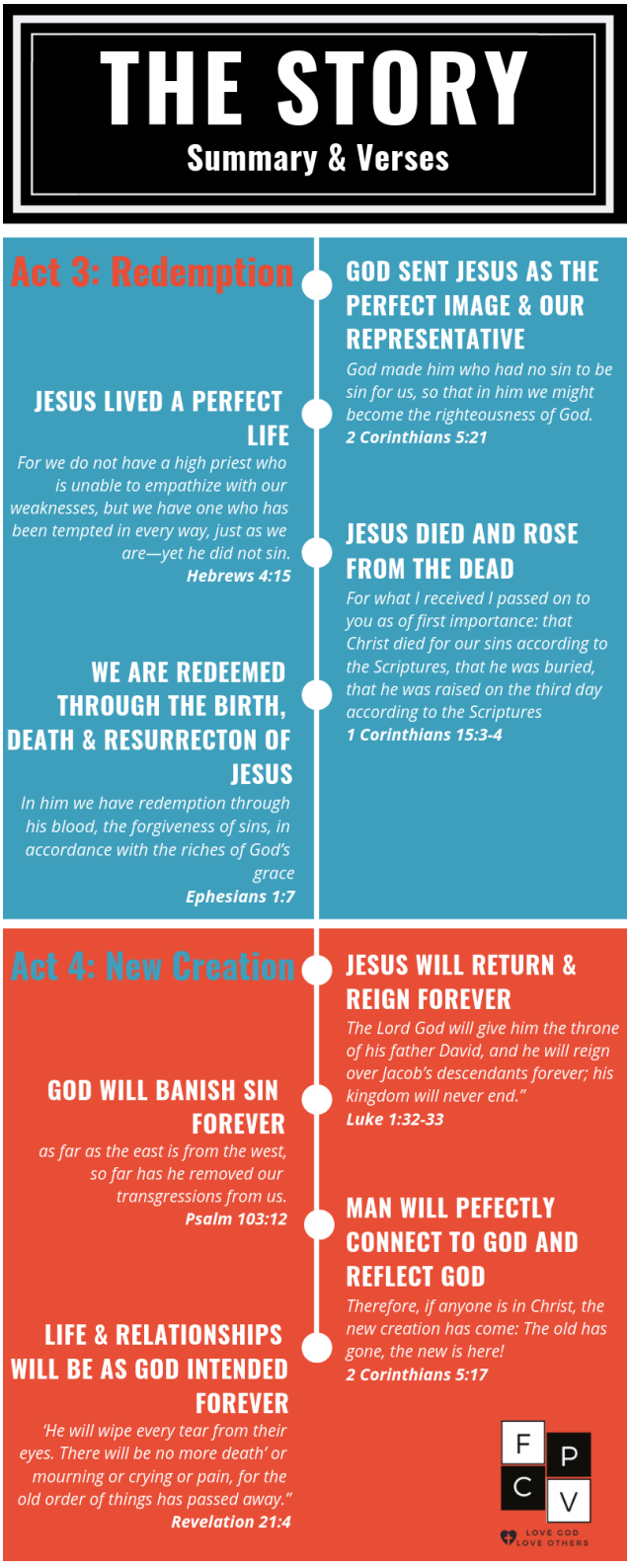
The memorization practice of the 13 to 16-year-old phase centers on key scripture passages and corresponding summary statements of the gospel story. This memorization practice is worked into the confirmation curriculum and is part of this rite of passage. The summary statements and verses have been taken and adapted from Tim Challies' book "Visual Theology: Seeing and Understanding the Truth About God."[27] See Figure 4 for a layout of these summaries and passages.

The primary practice of Bible reading at this phase continues to be the Bible reading plan along with the Life Journal, however students are now encouraged to read both the Old and New Testament portions of the plan. The primary practices of prayer introduced here include praying in color and the Jesus Creed. Praying in color introduces students to a new and creative way of praying while the Jesus Creed gives students another structured prayer to put in their prayer arsenal.

The secondary practices we introduce at the 13 to 16-year-old age stage include practices of simplicity and self-denial and the practice of disentangling from cultural liturgies. These two practices are supplementary as one specific practice of self-denial, fasting from media, is introduced concurrently with the practice of identifying and abstaining from cultural liturgies. As students allow themselves to be removed from the influence of culture for a set period of time, they are better able to identify the content of cultural liturgies and understand the level of

27. Tim Challies and Josh Byers, *Visual Theology: Seeing and Understanding the Truth about God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 64-77.

Figure 4: The Story Summary Verses



influence it has over. The tool used to introduce students to the practice of disentangling from cultural liturgies is The Center for Parent/Youth Understanding's "How To Use Your Head To Guard Your Heart: A 3(D) Guide To Making Wise Media Choices."[28] Additionally, during this age-stage, students are given the opportunity to go on a short-term mission trip within the United States or to Mexico.

16 to 18-Year-Old Stage

The rite of passage for the 16 to 18-year-old age stage is a graduation weekend. This weekend is specifically for graduating seniors. A month or two prior to graduation, the students take a road trip out of town together on a Friday afternoon and come back late Saturday evening. This rite of passage is a time to reaffirm all they have learned over the last 16 to 18 years and a time to bless them as they officially cross the threshold into young adulthood. Late afternoon on Saturday, parents of the students and other significant adults in their lives, including their prayer/support team, are invited to be a part of a rite of passage ceremony which involves a symbolic crossing of the threshold into adulthood, a laying on of hands prayer, and a time of encouragement and blessing. All of this serves as yet another reminder that the student has crossed the threshold into young adulthood and, as a result, has entered a new level of responsibility in their faith and in their faith community. On the Sunday morning immediately following the Saturday night students stand before the church and the church acknowledges this significant step in their lives as the church commits to the students while the students renew their commitment to the church. Students are also offered an opportunity to share with the church what they have learned through this experience.

28. This resource is purchased directly from CPYU at https://cpyuresourcecenter.org/product/how-to-use-your-head-to-guard-your-heart-a-3d-guide-to-making-wise-media-choices-10-pack/.

The memorization practice for the 16 to18-year-old phase is a completion of the story Bible memory verses. If the students have yet to recite these verses before a leader, now is their chance to do that.

The primary practices of this phase continue to include the full Bible reading plan with the meditative practice of the Life Journal. However, we also introduce students to the Valesteras method, another practice of reading and meditating on the Bible. The primary practice of prayer we introduce here is practicing the presence of God. Both of these are introduced as part of the graduation weekend.

The secondary practices introduced at this phase include practices of discernment and practices of rest. The practices of discernment are introduced here to give students more tools when it comes to decision making as they approach the threshold of adulthood. The practices of rest are introduced her in expectation of a confusing time of life when expectations become even more demanding.

Research Methodology

The following section presents the methodology of research of this project. Due to the extensive nature of this age – stage discipleship program and the limited time of this study, research will focus in on one aspect of the program. While it would be ideal to conduct research periodically over 18 years with the goal of assessing the effectivity of this entire program, it is not realistic for the nature of this thesis. In light of this, the research will focus in on one of the catechism sessions for nine to twelve-year-old kids. Many elements of this program have already been initiated, with the exception of confirmation, graduation weekend, and an official rollout of

the primary and secondary practices. However, as for catechism, session one was recently completed which means the research will be conducted for session one.[29]

In the light of the circumstances and the extensive nature of the study, a quasi – experiment with a one – group, after – only design is the most effective way to capture the most helpful information. The primary goal of this research is to assess the effectiveness of the New City Catechism as it relates to the spiritual formation of kids. Measuring spiritual formation as it relates to a child's transformation into the image of God is difficult, if not impossible. This is compounded by the limited time frame of this study. However, there are potential indicators of spiritual formation as it relates to a specific program which can be measured. The starting point for this research is a relevant research question. Our overall goal is to measure the effectiveness of the specific practice of catechism. However, the research question needs to be more specific for the gathering of helpful information regarding its effectiveness. In light of this, the research question is: *after completing a session of catechism, can children articulate the questions and answers for that specific session?* While this question does not necessarily measure spiritual growth, it does measure the effectiveness of the practice of catechism, which utilizes both repetition and memorization. Since Christian practices, or counterliturgies, are what God uses to form heart habits which then aim our loves towards God and his kingdom resulting in an ever – deepening connection to God and an ever – increasing reflection of God, then measuring the effectiveness of the practice of catechism will provide helpful information.

Unfortunately, one limitation of this study will be the number of participants. The church in which this study will be conducted is a smaller church of approximately 150 congregants. On a typical Sunday, the children's ministry has 20 children, ranging from birth to sixth grade. Since

29. See Appendix B for an overview of the catechism questions.

the target age range of this study is nine to twelve-year-old kids, there is a fairly small sample size of children who are available to participate in this study. We started the session with seven kids but only five kids completed the session.

The survey method to be used is a semi – structured interview. There are a few key reasons behind this. First, since the study is directed at children, if the child doesn't understand the question, there is someone there to clarify as opposed to a questionnaire, where there can be no clarification. Additionally, it's will allow for the interviewer to pick up on non—verbal language, which is a very important when talking with children who may or may not feel they can answer questions freely. Lastly, it allows for the interviewer to dive deeper into questions or areas that come up along the way. The interview has both open – ended questions to collect qualitative data and closed – ended questions to collect quantitative data. See Figure 5 for the questions used in the semi – structured interviews with each of the children.

Figure 5: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Male or female (answered by the interviewer)
2. How old are you?
3. What did you like most about catechism?
4. What did you like least about catechism?
5. How do you best remember something?

Questions 6-10 are closed-ended questions with a five-point scale.

Using the following scale, answer the following questions (this scale will be printed out and set before them so they can read it and point to their answers)

- 1: Strongly Disagree
- 2: Disagree
- 3: Neutral
- 4: Agree
- 5: Strongly Agree

6. I enjoyed catechism
7. I learned a lot from catechism.
8. I feel closer to God as a result of catechism.
9. I can recite all 10 questions and answers from catechism from memory.
10. I can't wait to go to the next catechism session.

Questions 11-13 are close ended questions with an 11-point scale

11. Out of the 10 question and answers, how many can you recite without help?
12. Out of the 10 question and answers, how many can you recite with help?
13. Out of the 10 question and answers, how many are you not able to recite at all?

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14. How could we help you better remember the questions and answers?
15. In 1-2 sentences, what would make catechism a better learning experience?

Evaluation of the Research Results

The semi – structured interviews will provide both qualitative and quantitative information which will help improve the effectiveness of catechism. After completion of the interviews, the data will be gathered, analyzed, and evaluated, after which conclusions will be drawn. Out of this will come recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the practice of catechism. Ideally, this kind of research should happen periodically for continual improvement.

The next chapter will present the research results and subsequent conclusions.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH RESULTS

Introduction

The research for this project focuses in on one catechism session for nine to twelve-year-old children. The primary goal of this research is to assess the effectiveness of the New City Catechism as it relates to the spiritual formation of kids. The essential question is: "After completing a session of catechism, can children articulate the questions and answers for that specific session?" It is not easy to measure spiritual growth in young people and this question ultimately does not measure spiritual growth. However, the answer to this question can provide a measure of the effectiveness of the practice of catechism. Christian practices, such as catechism, are what God uses to form our habits which then aim our loves towards God and his kingdom resulting in an ever – deepening connection to God and an ever – increasing reflection of God. Because of this, we can conclude that measuring the effectiveness of the practice of catechism, specifically in the area of memorization, will provide some useful information.

This chapter begins with a quick overview of the results on the five Likert scale questions. The results from these five questions were both encouraging and enlightening. Next, the effectiveness of the current version of the catechism program in regards to the practice of memorization will be presented. The results for this section come primarily from question eleven. After this, two problematic areas will be examined. These areas came to light primarily as a result of the qualitative interview questions. This chapter will conclude by addressing five potential next steps for increasing the effectiveness of catechism, including some ideas for further research.

As a reminder, all of the interview questions can be found in Figure Five. The transcripts from all five interviews are in Appendix F. While we started the first catechism session seven children, we completed the first session with five children. Due to family commitments, two of

the children were not able to finish the session. The following results are based on the interviews with the five children who finished the session.

Results from the 5 Likert Scale Questions

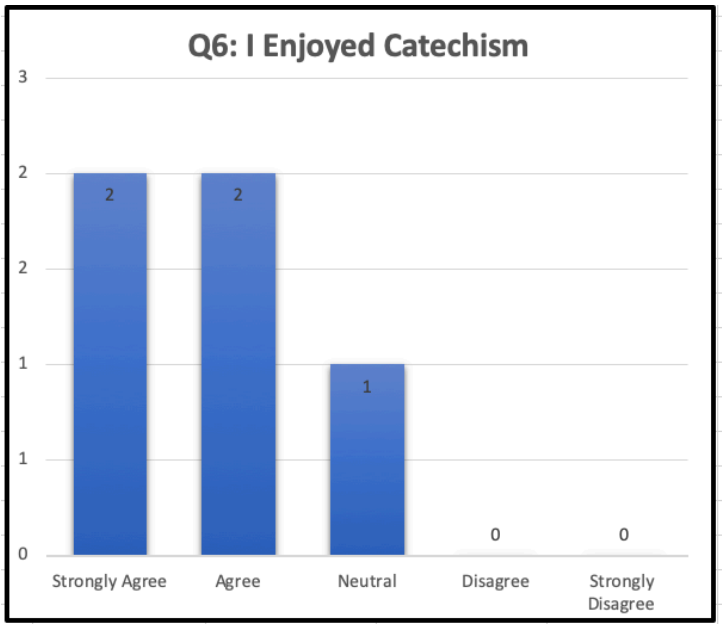
The results from the Likert scale questions, questions 6-10, were both helpful and encouraging. Figure 6 is a table presenting the children's responses to all five Likert scale questions.

Figure 6: Table of Responses to Likert Scale Questions

Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Q6	2	2	1	0	0	5
Q7	1	3	1	0	0	5
Q8	3	2	0	0	0	5
Q9	0	0	4	1	0	5
Q10	2	1	2	0	0	5

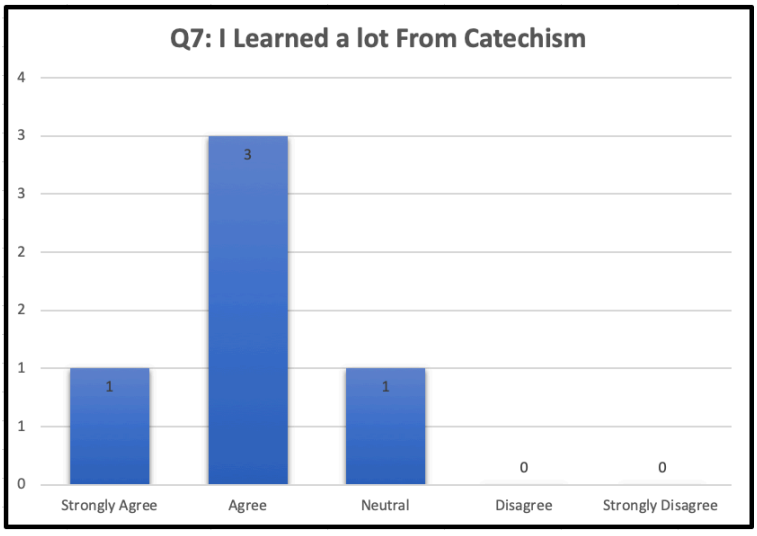
The first Likert scale question, question 6 on the interview questions, states, "I enjoyed catechism.". Figure 7 below shows the results from the children's responses to this question. As can be seen in Figure 7, two children strongly agreed with this, two children agreed, and one child was neutral. Simple follow up questions revealed that the neutral response was attributed to a child's dislike of the practice of memorization. The reasons the kids enjoyed catechism included: a smaller class size (as compared to the normal Sunday and Wednesday programs), learning "new things" with friends, and fewer distractions due to disruptive kids. One child even indicated that catechism was too short and they wanted it to be longer. These results were encouraging as an enjoyable learning experience is important when it comes to catechism.

Figure 7: Graph of Responses to Likert Scale Question 6



The second Likert scale question, the seventh interview question, reads "I learned a lot from catechism." As seen below in figure 8, three of the children answered in agreement, one child strongly agreed, and one child was neutral. Responding to a follow up question, one child

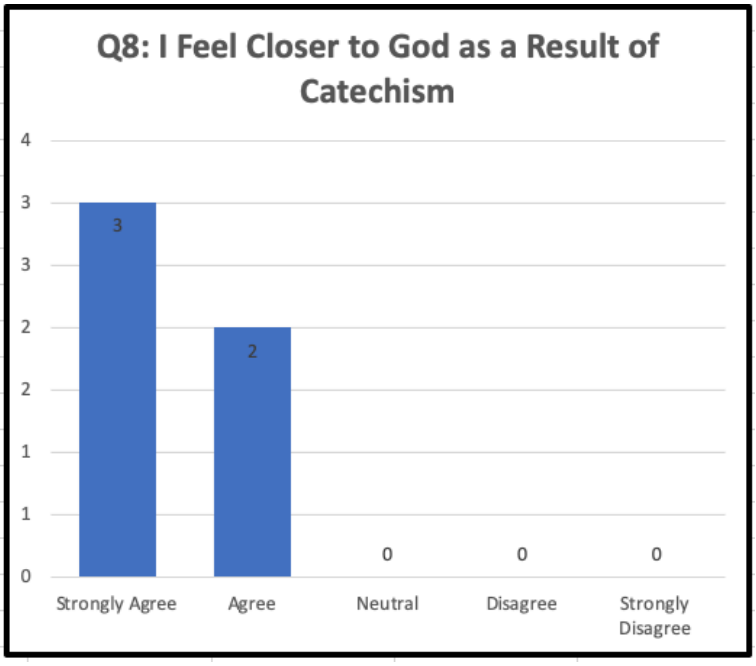
Figure 8: Graph of Responses to Likert Scale Question 7



encouragingly stated "I learned that everyone is born with sin and, like, we can't escape the sin and stuff like that." The neutral response was attributed to having a lot of questions about the material and not having enough time to have all of those questions answered. Two other issues surfaced in response to this question. The first was three of the kids insightfully expressing that more class time is necessary for the practice of memorization. Additionally, three children commented on the distractions created by two specific children. These issues will be addressed in a later section.

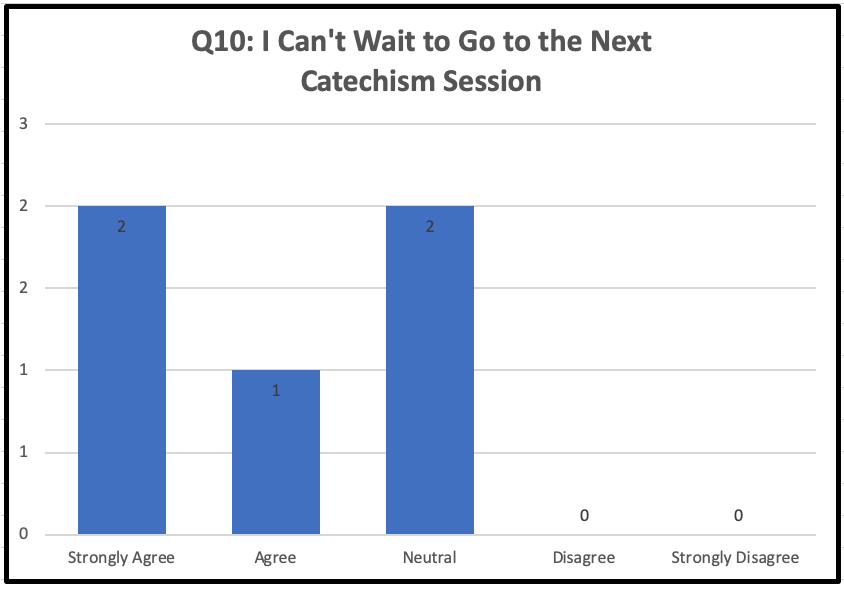
The third Likert question, the eighth interview question, stated "I feel closer to God as a result of catechism." This statement is intentionally vague in its wording, as "closer" is not defined. Regardless, the kids' responses were reassuring. Figure nine reveals that three kids strongly agreed and two kids agreed with the statement. Kids responded with comments such as "It helped me to understand more about him and his ways," and "I feel like I understand him more."

Figure 9: Graph of Responses to Likert Scale Question 8



The fourth Likert scale question, interview question number nine, stated "I can recite all 10 questions and answers from memory." The children's responses to this statement, which can be seen above in Figure 6, proved this question to be unclear and slightly confusing. The majority of the children responded with "neutral" due to the unclear nature of the question. Because of this, the results from this question are not particularly helpful for the purposes of analyzing the effectiveness of catechism. This issue could have been eliminated with a pre-testing of the questions. Fortunately, the remaining results were enough to balance out the lack of results due to this one question.

Figure 10: Graph of Responses to Likert Scale Question 10



The fifth and final Likert scale question, interview question ten, states "I can't wait to go to the next catechism session." As seen in Figure 10 above, two of the children answered in strong agreement, one child agreed, and two children were neutral. The two children who were neutral cited their distaste for memorization as the result of their neutral rating. One of those kids stated "It's the memorizing part that I don't really want to do again. But I'm looking forward to

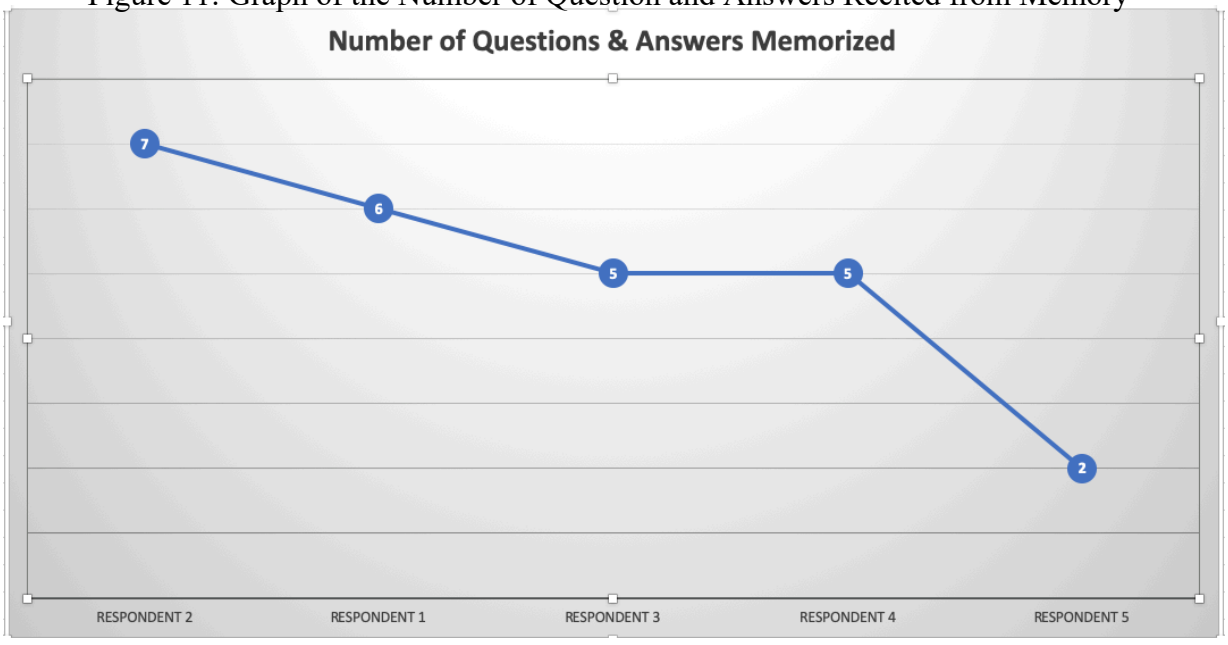
everything else." The one child who responded in agreement said she wanted to "learn more and, like, remember everything so I have it in my head for when I'm older. And I don't have to learn it, like, again."

The results from these questions were both encouraging and enlightening. The children spoke with candor and earnestness all while giving their opinions about the catechism experience. As will be seen in the following section, all of this helped to better analyze and answer the question "after completing a session of catechism, can children articulate the question and answers for that specific session?"

The Effectiveness of Catechism

Figure 11 is a straightforward and simple graph, presenting the results of the number of questions and answers each respondent could recite from memory after the completion of the catechism session. This is out of a total of ten questions and answers. The graph starts with the respondent who memorized the most question and answers and progresses to the respondent who memorized the fewest questions and answers.

Figure 11: Graph of the Number of Question and Answers Recited from Memory



As shown in Figure 11, one child was able to recite seven question and answers from memory, one child was able to recite six from memory, two children were able to recite five from memory, and one child was able to recite two from memory. In light of these results, the answer to our primary research question "After completing a session of catechism, can children articulate the question and answers for that specific session?" is both yes and no. None of the children were able to recite all ten question and answers. Additionally, some children were closer to memorizing all ten question and answers than other children. Kids attributed the inability to memorize all ten questions and answers to a number of reasons. Three children expressed that their lives are too busy and therefore they don't have much, if any, free time. This lines up with many of the findings presented in Chapter One. Two children attributed their lack of memorization of all ten questions and answers to both their distaste of memorization and their lack of proficiency when it comes to memorization. One child said "I don't really like the memorizing part… I'm not very good at it." The lack of memorization was also attributed to insufficient time spent in class on the practice of memorization. One child insightfully pointed out that we should spend just as much time memorizing as we do understanding each question and answer when we meet as a class. In light of the results and the children's comments, there are some elements that are working and some elements of catechism which should be corrected to increase the effectiveness of memorizing all ten questions and answers.

In order to get the respondents' ideas on increasing the effectiveness of memorization, the question was asked: "How could we help you better remember the questions and answers?" This is question 14 on the semi-structured interview questions (see Figure 5). The children had helpful, and sometimes humorous, responses to this question. One of the children who admittedly had a hard time with memorization pointed out that we should spend half the time in

class understanding a question and answer and the other half practicing the memorization of it. Another child proposed we should focus on less questions and answers each session. When probed, she proposed five questions and answers as the ideal number for each session. One child who claimed her life was too busy said it would be nice to have a travel case in which to put her catechism book so she can take it with her wherever she goes. Furthermore, each respondent liked the idea of review sessions, scheduled outside of the normal catechism class time. One child even added that 60 minutes would be too long for these sessions, but 35 minutes would be ideal. One of the kids who struggles with memorization suggested shortening our 10-minute break or even eliminating it all together. In her opinion, this would allow more time for us to practice memorization. Two of the children, a brother and sister, suggested the use of practice charts linked to incentives or rewards. When asked about rewards, some of the respondents' ideas included gift cards to "Me and Eds" (a local pizza place), a travel case for the catechism book, Bey Blades, small Lego sets, slime kits, and candy. One child requested office supplies as a reward "for office-supply nerds like me." It was even suggested that these rewards could all be put in a prize box out of which the kids could choose. One of the kids even suggested we include a mobile phone in the prize box.

Group incentives were also discussed. The idea is that kids would receive a group reward if they were all able to memorize and recite those specific questions and answers for each specific session. Some of the ideas for group incentives included a day at RollerTowne (a local roller rink), a visit to Chuck E. Cheese (which one child referred to as "disgusting"), time at Quantum Leap (a local trampoline park), a day at Adventure Park (a small amusement park in town), and going to lunch as a group.

Problematic Areas

There were two potential problem areas which this study revealed: the problem of a few disruptive kids and the problem of kids with low motivation when it comes to memorization.

The Problem of Disruptive Children

Three respondents pointed out the distracting nature of two specific disruptive kids. These two kids began the catechism session but failed to finish due to other commitments. This was not just noticed by the children but also by myself as the facilitator of the session. When asked about how to address disruption, the respondents had many ideas. One child suggested bringing back the "beard." The beard was an actual costume beard which was found on a shelf in the classroom in the middle of a catechism class as I was looking for an object to help a few distracted kids to focus. I would give the beard to the child who was speaking so all the other children knew who had permission to speak. If you did not have the beard, you did not have permission to speak. If you wanted to speak, someone had to hand you the beard and then, and only then, could you speak. This method worked when it was utilized but it was not a consistent practice. The main problem was the disappearing nature of the beard. Some days, the beard would be relocated by a child or a leader and it was not available for a specific catechism class. This led to inconsistency, which is never good when it comes to discipline and structure with kids. Two kids suggested the use of negative reinforcement such as taking away the disruptive child's snack or break, or even requiring the disruptive child to stick around after class to help clean up. One child suggested limiting distractions, specifically not setting out the bins of permanent markers on the table because kids would repeatedly reach for the bin and grab more and more markers, thus distracting others. Two kids suggested parental involvement, including

threatening to talk to parents and actually talking to parents. When the idea of making a parent attend with a disruptive child was suggested, each and every child liked this idea.

Two final suggestions for dealing with disruptive kids include the institution of dojo points and the "clip" system. These suggestions came from two children, a brother and a sister, who cited previous teachers who used these systems. Dojo points are points which can be used as money to purchase items every Friday afternoon. Children are issued points when they are on task in the classroom or when they go above and beyond what is asked of them. At any point in time, the teacher can award points to a child for positive behaviors. Additionally, the teacher can take away points when a child is not on task or when a child is behaving in negative, or distracting, ways. The kids reported that a child would lose dojo points if they needed to use the restroom during class, as the teacher was very firm on the belief that kids should go to the restroom during recess. The teacher kept an ongoing record of these points and every Friday, kids used these points to purchase specific items including, but not limited to, eating lunch with the teacher, switching seats with someone, wearing a hat in class, and putting your feet up on the desk. Both kids emphasized the importance of offering items which kids would want to purchase with their points.

The second suggestion for dealing with disruptive kids is in the "clip" system. In this system, there is a chart at the front of the classroom with each student's name on it and six indicators of behavior laid out on a scale. The chart is constructed in such a way that each child is allotted a clothespin which they can move up or down that scale, reflecting their behavior in class on that specific day. Every day, each child starts out "on track," which is the middle of the scale. If a child is having a good day behaviorally, the teacher can ask that child to move their clip up one level to "good job." During the day, that child has the potential of moving up yet one

more level to “super student.” However, if a kid is having a rough day behaviorally after starting out the day “on track,” the teacher will ask that kid to move their clothespin to “think about it.” If that child continues with his or her behavioral issues, the next level is “parental contact,” and the final level is “principal’s office.” When asked about the potential embarrassment which could result from standing before your peers and moving your clothespin to “think about it,” “parental contact,” or “principal’s office,” both kids affirmed it was embarrassing. However, one of the kids indicated that the fear of embarrassment sometimes helped him make better choices in class.

While both systems have their advantages and disadvantages, the dojo points system seems better suited for catechism as it does a good job of concretely reinforcing good behavior. With this system, kids walk away with a tangible item they can hold in their hand as opposed to the abstract reward of moving of a clothespin to a “better” place. Furthermore, I want church to be a safe place for kids where they don’t have to worry about embarrassment or shame.

The Problem of Low Motivation when it Comes to Memorization

The second problem area revealed by this study was that of low motivation when it comes to memorization. Indirectly linked to this issue is also the issue of expectations of memorization specifically when it comes to developmentally delayed children. Out of the five children in the study, three of the kids understood the importance of memorizing the questions and answers. Two of the children, sisters, did not like the practice of memorization. One of those children even admitted that memorization was a difficult practice for her. While it is admittedly difficult to arrive at conclusions based on a study of five children, there are a few implications of these results.

The first implication relates to the expectations of catechism, specifically in regards to memorization. Regardless of the abilities of the child in this study who admittedly is not good at

memorization, some children who attend catechism will have learning disabilities that may hinder their ability to memorize all the questions and answers in the catechism. This must be addressed as it would be awful to turn kids away from catechism due to any sort of a learning disability.

The second implication has to do with the education of parents regarding the importance of the practice of catechism and, more specifically, memorization. Before their child begins a catechism session, it is important to educate parents on the importance of this practice, as we are laying a foundation of faith that will last their child's entire life. As stated in Chapter 1, church is just one of many commitments and options for children today. Families frequently skip church in favor of sports games, gymnastic meets, dance competitions, and a myriad of other activities. Parents do this willingly, not understanding the potential harm to their child's faith. The expectation of attendance must be expressed not only to the child, but also to the parents. Additionally, the importance of attendance must be expressed to both the child and the parents. If a strong foundation of faith is important for their child, parents must understand what that practically looks like. Catechism, and church, cannot just be one of many activities equal in value and priority; both must be prioritized over other activities. Furthermore, parents should be educated in the importance of the practice of memorization. It is necessary for parents to understand it is not about memorization for the sake of memorizing, rather it is memorization for the sake of gripping our heart habits and pointing them towards God and his kingdom. For those kids who are able to memorize, the practice of memorization must be a priority.

Next Steps

The final section of this chapter addresses next steps which must be taken to improve the effectiveness of the practice of catechism. There are five of these steps, a few which overlap.

Step 1: Rework Class as to Split Time Between Understanding and Memorization

Many of the kids emphasized the need to spend more time in class engaging the practice of memorization. One child wisely suggested splitting the time equally between teaching and memorizing. As we prepare to launch the next catechism session, the curriculum will be reworked so as to reflect this reality. The first half of each class will focus on teaching, and the second half of class will focus on memorizing, utilizing a number of creative memorization practices. If the effectiveness of catechism is based primarily on memorization, it is wise to spend more time on the practice of memorization.

Step 2: Decide on the Number of Questions and Answers to Cover Each Session

Currently, ten questions and answers are covered each five-week catechism session. This means children are introduced to two new questions and answers during each class. Each class lasts 70 minutes, which ultimately allows for 30 minutes to cover each question and answer (there is a ten-minute break in the middle of the class). This is a relatively short period of time to teach the kids and engage them in the practice of memorization. One suggestion was to shorten, or even eliminate, the break. While this option would give a little more time, it ultimately would not be enough time. Another suggestion was to decrease the number of questions and answers in each session from ten to five. This option would provide significantly more time but would double the time frame it would take each child to get through the entire catechism. Instead of five five-week sessions, there would be ten five-week sessions, doubling the time commitment of all parties (the instructor, parents and children) in a culture which is struggling to find time as it is.

In light of this, the next step is to create a catechism advisory group which includes anywhere between four and six parents of children between the ages of seven and eleven. The primary goal of this advisory group is to decide on the number of questions and answers covered

in each catechism session while keeping in mind the commitment of catechism and the memory expectations of catechism. This group will meet, discuss, pray, and then decide.

Step 3: Decide How to Approach Children with Learning Disabilities.

Catechism should be an equal opportunity experience for all children regardless of learning abilities or disabilities. The child should not be prohibited from attending catechism because they are unable to memorize all 52 questions and answers. Therefore, in communicating the expectations of catechism, some thought must be given as to how to communicate these expectations in a way that leaves the door open for all kids to attend regardless of their ability to memorize the questions and answers.

This calls for two specific actions. The first action is to add this issue to the agenda of the catechism advisory group, as these parents will have some insight as to how to communicate the expectations of catechism while not excluding kids with learning disabilities. The second action is to consult with two to three educators in our congregation to get their input. One, in particular, is a former assistant superintendent and also has a grandson with a learning disability. She will be a great resource in this area. After consulting with the catechism advisory group and two to three educators, a specific plan will be created as to how to communicate the memory expectations of catechism while also not excluding children with learning disabilities.

Step 4: Institute a Plan for Disruptive Kids

Children will have attention issues and be disruptive from time to time. Adults have attention issues and are disruptive. Some of this is the nature of being human. However, when that disruption consistently distracts other children, it must be addressed. There is a delicate balance between an oppressive environment with too many rules and a chaotic environment with no rules. Children need structure, but they need the right amount of structure. The “clip” system

suggested by two of the kids may work in the classroom, but has two significant flaws making it impractical for children's ministry. The first flaw is the abstract and conceptual nature of moving a clothespin on a scale indicating the nature of a child's behavior. The second flaw is the potential for shaming and embarrassing children. Church should be a safe place where children are free from embarrassing and shameful situations. Directing a child to move their clothespin down towards the negative end of a behavior scale in front of their peers seems opposed to a safe place where children do not experience unnecessary shame and embarrassment. With this in mind, a modified version of the dojo points system recommended by two of the children is a good place to start. This system will be in place at the start of the next catechism session, awarding points for positive behavior and, if necessary, deducting points for negative behavior. These points can then be used by children during the final class of each session to purchase rewards and incentives. At the conclusion of the next catechism session, this plan will then be evaluated and altered as needed.

Step 5: Institute a Plan to Educate Parents

Parental education will have two fronts. First, at the beginning of each five-week catechism session, parents will be required to attend the initial 10 minutes of the first session where the memorization expectations and time commitments will be presented. During this time, parents will get acquainted with all of the available tools for memorization. Parents will also be introduced to the "person as lover" model of education, addressing the reality that we are not just educating their child's mind but also forming their child's heart. The second front of parental education occur through weekly emails after each individual catechism class. These emails will introduce parents to the questions and answers for that week's class, reminding them of all the tools available, and reinforcing the importance of the practice of memorization when it comes to

forming their child's heart and building a foundation of faith that lasts a lifetime. Logic is in the heart has its own jurisdiction over the use of a one and was going to issue is what you will need

Conclusion

It has been established that the church must lead emerging generations to grow up into their identity as the image of God. Chapter One addressed the realities of extended adolescence, specifically in relation to identity formation in emerging generations. Next, Chapter Two presented a biblical and theological understanding of identity formation in Christians, focusing on the Christian's identity as the image of God.. The image of God is the Christian's identity and it is the goal of identity formation. Whereas Chapter Two presented the goal of Christian formation, Chapter Three focused on the practical realities of identity formation and the image of God, presenting the "how" of Christian formation into the image of God. The project design of the thesis, presented in Chapter Four, originated out of the findings of Chapters One through Three and put all of the research into a practical plan churches can institute, providing enough structure to lead emerging generations as they grow into their God-given identity as the image of God. This final chapter addressed the outcomes of a study on the effectiveness of catechism and proposed five practical steps to take in the catechism program as this program moves forward.

The church has the sobering responsibility and privilege to lead emerging generations to embrace and live out their identity as the image of God. Emerging generations are not the future of the church; they are an integral part of the today's church. We cannot segregate them apart from the rest of the church and hope they "become Christian." Rather, we must include them in

the life of the congregation, training them in Christian practices so that they can, along with us, "sing out this, our canticle: we are the image of the invisible."[1]

1. AZ Lyrics, *Image of the Invisible* (London: Island Records, 2005), https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/thrice/imageoftheinvisible.html.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Communion Workshop Curriculum

One Bread, One Cup, One People[1]

Guide for Leaders

Scripture

1 Corinthians 10:16, 17; 11:23-25

Focus

When we participate in the Lord's Supper, Christ feeds us with himself, and we become one with him and each other.

Goals

Know: Tell how the bread and wine of communion symbolize the body and blood of Christ and say what they've meant to you personally.

Grow: Feel one with Christ and his people as you share your stories of the bread and wine.

Show: Anticipate celebrating the Lord's Supper with God's people, either soon or at a later date.

[1] This workshop has been taken and adapted from Christian Reformed Church's Faith Formation Ministries event entitled "One Bread, One Cup, One People: An Intergenerational Event on the Lord's Supper."

1

One Bread, One Cup, One People
Communion Workshop

Step 1: Introduction Activities

Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to our One Bread, One Cup, One People workshop.

Ask the attendees the following questions:

1. What is your name?
2. Tell us about one of your favorite memories.
3. What is your favorite smell in the whole world? Why? What does it remind you of?
4. If people need help thinking of favorite smells, here are a few favorites: pizza, suntan lotion, popcorn, soil/dirt, coffee beans, baby lotion, vanilla, hay!

There are many tastes and sounds and smells and objects and symbols that help us remember something that happened, something we care about, or something that's important to remember.

Hold up a picture of a Stop sign. What does this symbol remind us of?
Hold up a peace symbol and ask the same question.

Comment that symbols like these are all around us, and that before we go any farther, we're going to take a symbol challenge.

Symbols are all around us…

Symbols Challenge Game

Using Keynote, show the symbols one at a time and have the kids guess what the symbols stand for:

- Handicapped symbol
- Recycle symbol
- Heart symbol
- Apple symbol
- Bluetooth symbol
- McDonalds symbol
- Nike symbol
- One Way Sign

I Remember

Comment to the group that so far you have talked about how certain smells and tastes and symbols help us remember things. Explain that you've also asked a few volunteers to bring items to show and talk about—items that help them remember something special.

Invite your volunteers to talk about the object they brought and what the object helps them remember. After each person shares, thank him or her and comment on how good it is to have signs and symbols like these to help us remember.

Step 2: Scripture and Wonder

Scripture

Hold up a loaf of bread and a chalice filled with juice. Invite people from the group to tell what these symbols mean.

Explain that the bread and wine are like Jesus **being with us** in a way that's too deep to explain and understand, but we can begin to understand it just a little if we talk about them as symbols.

Agree together that Jesus gave us the bread and wine to help us remember the most important thing that ever happened—his death and resurrection—and to remind us that we are one people, a people forgiven of all their sins.

Call your Reader and Actor volunteers forward and explain that *the Reader* is going to read a Bible passage, 1 Corinthians 11:23-25, that tells us about a special way to remember what Jesus has done for us and *the Actor* is going to act out what Jesus did. Invite the group to watch and listen, paying close attention to the sights, smells, tastes, sounds, and touches in the passage.

Alternative Option

Since the verses from Corinthians are rather abstract for children and for those unfamiliar with the Bible, you may wish to use the Last Supper Readers' Theater from *The Living Bible* (final page of curriculum) in place of the first Corinthians reading.

If you do so, create large nametags for each reader. You will need a Narrator, someone to read the part of Jesus, and from two to 12 disciples. The disciples' roles would be great for children since they only have one line each.

Make sure your props are ready too. You will need an unsliced loaf of bread and a chalice of juice.

Ask your readers to come forward where people at all the tables can see them.

Before the event, send a copy of the script to the people who will read the Narrator and Jesus parts.

This will give them time to practice the reading. If possible, look for some good teen readers for these roles. If time permits, hold a brief rehearsal before the event begins.

After the Scripture reading, hold up the bread and juice again. Explain that Christians all over the world know these symbols. They are symbols of the love and power of Jesus.

Explain that for the next 20 minutes or so, we will be thinking together about these symbols through the following activities of remembering, wondering and creating. Invite people to enjoy the bread and juice on their tables as they talk together, if they haven't already done so.

- Explain that to keep the group moving you'll signal them when it's time to go on to the next section.
- If the group seems stuck, be ready to help—maybe with some memories or wondering of your own.

#1: Remember: Explain that the very first thing they will do together is tell stories— stories of a time when communion meant a lot to them. (If you have a volunteer who is willing to briefly tell a story at this point, that would be great. Or do so yourself. Sometimes hearing a story will make it easier for others to tell their story.)

- Hand out the *Loaf and Chalice* coloring page for kids to have in front of them while the discussion part takes place. For some kids, coloring will help them to participate at a level they would not without it.

For the remember section, use the following prompts and questions to lead a group discussion:

- Tell each other stories about communion. Is there one special communion service that you remember? Why?
- If you don't take communion yet, tell what you notice during communion services. How do they make you feel?

#2: Wonder: Then they'll spend some time "wondering" together about communion. What does it mean to be part of the body of Christ? What does it mean to be forgiven? What have they always wondered about the Lord's Supper but never dared to ask? There are some wondering questions on the tables to help with this.

For the wonder section, use the following prompts and questions to lead a group discussion:

- What do you wonder about during the Lord's Supper?
- Why do you suppose Jesus gave us the bread and wine to help us remember?
- I wonder why it's important that God's people take communion together?
- I wonder how taking communion might change the way we live during the week?

#3: Create: You'll make symbols of the love of Jesus and deliver them to the communion table in your sanctuary at the end of this session.

Have fun making the chain of hearts, but let the group know that it's going to be part of a thanks offering at the end of your session. And don't forget to ask someone (maybe a child) to carry the chain to the communion table (along with any colored cup and chalice drawings).

- Choose a heart from the stack on your table, and write your name on it. Make a chain with all the paper hearts at your table, taping closed the open ends. The hearts are a symbol that we all are one as the body of Christ.
- When this event concludes around the communion table, you'll link your group's heart chain with those from the other tables.

Step 3: Responding

After your final transition, comment that communion helps us remember what Jesus did for us.

It also helps us understand that we are now all part of the same group—the body of Christ.

Ask all group members to follow you through the church to the communion table that you use when you celebrate the Lord's Supper together. They should bring with them the heart chain from their table and any loaves and chalices that the children have colored.
(Bring some tape and extra hearts to join the chains together.)

When you are all gathered around the table, ask your Scripture reader to read 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17; and ask your "actor" to hold up the bread and cup as they are mentioned.

Invite each chain holder to move toward the table. Use your tape (and additional hearts) to join the sections of the chain together and drape them from the table or hang them on a wall near the table.

Invite children to place their colored loaves and chalices on the table too.

As you are gathered here around the table, ask for volunteers to retell a story they told their table groups today—this time sharing it with the whole church family.

Then ask group members to join hands as you close with a simple prayer of thanksgiving.
Invite them to join you in saying *"We thank you, Jesus"* after each petition.

For your amazing sacrifice that has made us clean and forgiven and free,
We thank you, Jesus.
For the bread and wine that help us remember your amazing love for us,
We thank you, Jesus.
For making us part of your body, the church,
We thank you, Jesus
For blessing us so that we can bless others in the world,
We thank you, Jesus.
Amen.

As people prepare to leave, tell them that just as Jesus blesses us, the members of his body, he wants us to bless others in the world—to be his hands and feet in our homes, our workplaces, our schools, and our neighborhoods.

Give each family or household a copy of the *Take It Further* ideas and encourage them to use one or more of these ideas during the coming weeks. Also give them copies of the *Home Activity* pages. Invite families with children to take one or more copies of those for their children to use at home.

Thank everyone for making your time together such a blessing!

Reader's Theater

The Last Supper

From *The Living Bible*, Mark 14:12-26

narrator: On the first day of the Passover, the day the lambs were sacrificed, Jesus' disciples asked him where he wanted to go to eat the traditional Passover supper. He sent two of them into Jerusalem to make the arrangements.

Jesus *(facing two of the disciples)***:** As you are walking along, you will see a man coming toward you carrying a pot of water. Follow him. At the house he enters, tell the man in charge, "Our Master sent us to see the room you have ready for us, where we will eat the Passover supper this evening!" He will take you upstairs to a large room all set up. Prepare our supper there.

narrator: So the two disciples went on ahead into the city and found everything as Jesus had said and prepared the Passover. In the evening Jesus arrived with the other disciples, and as they were sitting around the table eating, Jesus said,

Jesus: I solemnly declare that one of you will betray me, one of you who is here eating with me.

narrator: A great sadness swept over them, and one by one they asked him, **disciples** (*one by one*)**:** Am I the one?

Jesus: It is one of you twelve eating with me now. I must die, as the prophets declared long ago; but, oh, the misery ahead for the man by whom I am betrayed. Oh, that he had never been born!

narrator (*As Narrator is speaking, Jesus should take the loaf and break it into pieces*)**:** As they were eating, Jesus took bread and asked God's blessing on it and broke it in pieces and gave it to them and said,

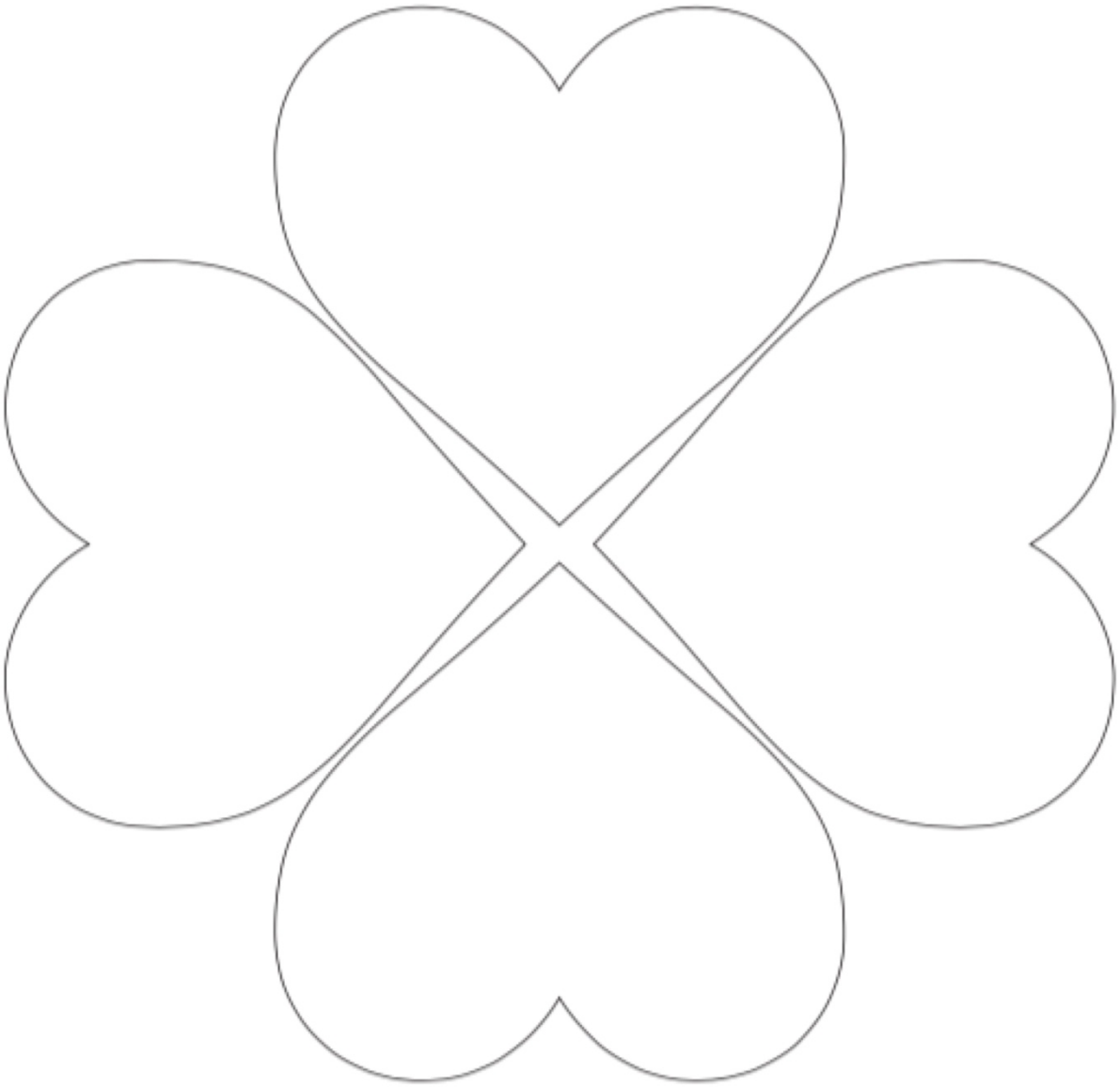
Jesus (*handing pieces of bread to the disciples*)**:** Eat it—this is my body.

narrator (*As Narrator is speaking, Jesus should hold up the chalice and pass it to the disciples*)**:** Then he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it and gave it to them; and they all drank from it. And he said to them,

Jesus: This is my blood, poured out for many, sealing the new agreement between God and people.

narrator: Then they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives.

Loaf and Chalice



1. Use this heart pattern to cut out hearts from construction paper. Use as many colors as you like. You will need at least one heart for every person who attends your event—and a few extras to link each group's chain to the others.

2. Fold the hearts in half in batches of four or five.

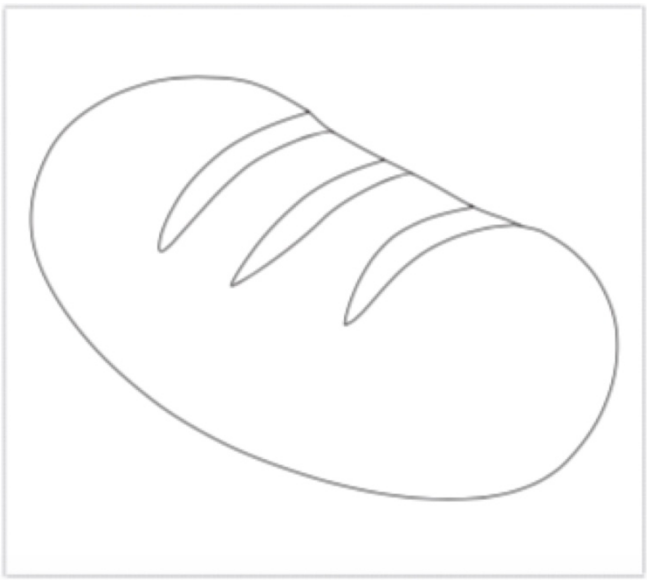
3. Cut out the center of the hearts, like this.

4. Cut a slit in the edge of each heart, like this.

Home Activity

Part 1

Color this shape. Then cut around the dotted lines and tape it like a "flap" over the words "Remember Jesus when you drink this cup."



Color this shape. Then cut around the dotted lines and tape it like a "flap" over the words "Remember Jesus when you eat this bread."

Home Activity
Part 2

CHRIST HAS DIED. CHRIST HAS RISEN.

CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN.

Take It Further

You've been reminded today what Jesus did for you.
You've been reminded that the bread and wine are symbols of God's great love.

Just as you have been blessed, look for ways during the coming weeks to be a blessing to others in your church and neighborhood. Look for ways to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the world.

Here are a few ideas:

- Make a card for someone who is hurting, sick, or sad. Either send it to them or deliver it with a plate of cookies.
- Volunteer at a food bank, a clothing center, or another mission/ outreach service that could use your time and hands.
- Offer your services or the services of your families to elderly people in your church congregation or neighborhood who may need help with yard work, home repairs, or car repairs.
- Get to know people in your church neighborhood who are not part of your church family.
- Dream up other ideas with members of your household! Each time you come to the Lord's table, be reminded of what we are called to be in the world.
- Continue to talk and wonder about the table of the Lord together as a household or family. Each time you take part in the sacrament, talk about what it means to you—tell your stories!

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CATECHISM OVERVIEW

Session 1

God, Creation & Fall, Law (part 1)

1 **What is our only hope in life and death?**
That we are not our own but belong to God.

2 **What is God?**
God is the Creator of everyone and everything?

3 **How many persons are there in God?**
There are three persons in one God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

4 **How and why did God create us?**
God created us male and female in his own image to glorify him.

5 **What else did God create?**
God created all things and all his creation was very good.

6 **How can we glorify God?**
By loving him and by obeying his commands and law.

7 **What does the law of God require?**
That we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and love our neighbor as ourselves.

8 **What is the law of God stated in the Ten Commandments?**
You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Honor your father and your mother. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony. You shall not covet.

9 **What does God require in the first, second, and third commandments?**
First, that we know God as the only true God. Second, that we avoid all idolatry. Third, that we treat God's name with fear and reverence.

10 **What does God require in the fourth and fifth commandments?**
Fourth, that on the Sabbath day we spend time in worship of God. Fifth, that we love and honor our father and our mother.

Session 2

God, Creation & Fall, Law (part 1)

11 **What does God require in the sixth, seventh, and eighth commandments?**
Sixth, that we do not hurt or hate our neighbor. Seventh, that we live purely and faithfully. Eighth, that we do not take without permission that which belongs to someone else.

12 **What does God require in the ninth and tenth commandments?**
Ninth, that we do not lie or deceive. Tenth, that we are content, not envying anyone.

13 **Can anyone keep the law of God perfectly?**
Since the fall, no human has been able to keep the law of God perfectly.

14 **Did God create us unable to keep his law?**
No, but because of the disobedience of Adam and Eve we are all born in sin and guilt, unable to keep God's law.

15 **Since no one can keep the law, what is its purpose?**
That we may know the holy nature of God, and the sinful nature of our hearts; and thus our need of a Savior.

16 **What is sin?**
Sin is rejecting or ignoring God in the world he created, not being or doing what he requires in his law.

17 **What is idolatry?**
Idolatry is trusting in created things rather than the Creator.

18 **Will God allow our disobedience and idolatry to go unpunished?**
No, God is righteously angry with our sins and will punish them both in this life, and in the life to come.

19 **Is there any way to escape punishment and be brought back into God's favor?**
Yes, God reconciles us to himself by a Redeemer.

20 **Who is the Redeemer?**
The only Redeemer is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Session 3

Christ, Redemption, Grace (part 1)

21 **What sort of Redeemer is needed to bring us back to God?**
One who is truly human and also truly God.

22 **Why must the Redeemer be truly human?**
That in human nature he might on our behalf perfectly obey the whole law and suffer the punishment for human sin.

23 **Why must the Redeemer be truly God?**
That because of his divine nature his obedience and suffering would be perfect and effective.

24 **Why was it necessary for Christ, the Redeemer, to die?**
Christ died willingly in our place to deliver us from the power and penalty of sin and bring us back to God.

25 **Does Christ's death mean all our sins can be forgiven?**
Yes, because Christ's death on the cross fully paid the penalty for our sin, God will remember our sins no more.

26 **What else does Christ's death redeem?**
Every part of fallen creation.

27 **Are all people, just as they were lost through Adam, saved through Christ?**
No, only those who are elected by God and united to Christ by faith.

28 **What happens after death to those not united to Christ by faith?**
They will be cast out from the presence of God, into hell, to be justly punished, forever.

29 **How can we be saved?**
Only by faith in Jesus Christ and in his substitutionary atoning death on the cross.

30 **What is faith in Jesus Christ?**
Receiving and resting on him alone for salvation as he is offered to us in the gospel.

31 **What do we believe by true faith?**
We believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

NEW CITY Catechism

Sessions 1-3

CATECHISM OVERVIEW

Session 4

Christ, Redemption, Grace (part 2)

32 What do justification and sanctification mean?
Justification means our declared righteousness before God. Sanctification means our gradual, growing righteousness.

33 Should those who have faith in Christ seek their salvation through their own works, or anywhere else?
No, everything necessary to salvation is found in Christ.

34 Since we are redeemed by grace alone, through Christ alone, must we still do good works and obey God's Word?
Yes, so that our lives may show love and gratitude to God; and so that by our godly behavior others may be won to Christ.

35 Since we are redeemed by grace alone, through faith alone, where does this faith come from?
From the Holy Spirit.

Spirit, Restoration, Growing in Grace (part 1)

36 What do we believe about the Holy Spirit?
That he is God, coeternal with the Father and the Son.

37 How does the Holy Spirit help us?
The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin, and he enables us to pray and to understand God's Word.

38 What is prayer?
Prayer is pouring out our hearts to God.

39 With what attitude should we pray?
With love, perseverance, and gratefulness.

40 What should we pray?
The whole Word of God directs us in what we should pray.

41 What is the Lord's Prayer?
Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

42 How is the Word of God to be read and heard?
With diligence, preparation, and prayer; so that we may accept it with faith and practice it in our lives.

Session 5

Spirit, Restoration, Growing in Grace (part 2)

43 What are the sacraments or ordinances?
Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

44 What is baptism?
Baptism is the washing with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

45 Is baptism with water the washing away of sin itself?
No, only the blood of Christ can cleanse us from sin.

46 What is the Lord's Supper?
Christ commanded all Christians to eat bread and to drink from the cup in thankful remembrance of him.

47 Does the Lord's Supper add anything to Christ's atoning work?
No, Christ died once for all.

48 What is the church?
A community elected for eternal life and united by faith, who love, follow, learn from, and worship God together.

49 Where is Christ now?
Christ rose bodily from the grave on the third day after his death and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

50 What does Christ's resurrection mean for us?
Christ triumphed over sin and death so that all who trust in him are raised to new life in this world and to everlasting life in the world to come.

51 Of what advantage to us is Christ's ascension?
Christ is now advocating for us in the presence of his Father and also sends us his Spirit.

52 What hope does everlasting life hold for us?
That we will live with and enjoy God forever in the new heaven and the new earth, where we will be forever freed from all sin in a renewed, restored creation.

NEW CITY Catechism

Sessions 4-5

Is Catechism the Same as Confirmation?

No. Confirmation is a one-year program (33 sessions) for 13 to 17-year-olds whereas catechism is 5 separate 5-class sessions for younger kids ages 9-12.

How Many Catechism Classes are There?

There are 5 separate sessions consisting of 5-classes each, offered at set times throughout the year. Sessions do not need to be taken in order and all 5 sessions will be offered at least one time per year. Kids must take all 5 sessions to officially "graduate" catechism. See the back of this brochure for this year's dates.

What Happens During a Catechism Class?

Classes consist of two 30-minute segments of engaging, interactive, hands-on and age-appropriate learning with a 10-minute break.

2018-2019 Catechism Sessions

All classes, unless otherwise announced, take place on Sundays from 10:30-11:40am during the second service at First Pres.

Session 1
God, creation and fall, law (1)

Sep 16
Sep 23
Sep 30
Oct 7
Oct 14

Session 2:
God, creation and fall, law (2)

Oct 21
Oct 28
Nov 4
Nov 11
Nov 18

Session 3:
Christ, Redemption, Grace (1)

Dec 2
Dec 9
Dec 16
Jan 6
Jan 13

Session 4:
Christ , Redemption, Grace (2) and Spirit, Restoration, Growing in Grace (1)

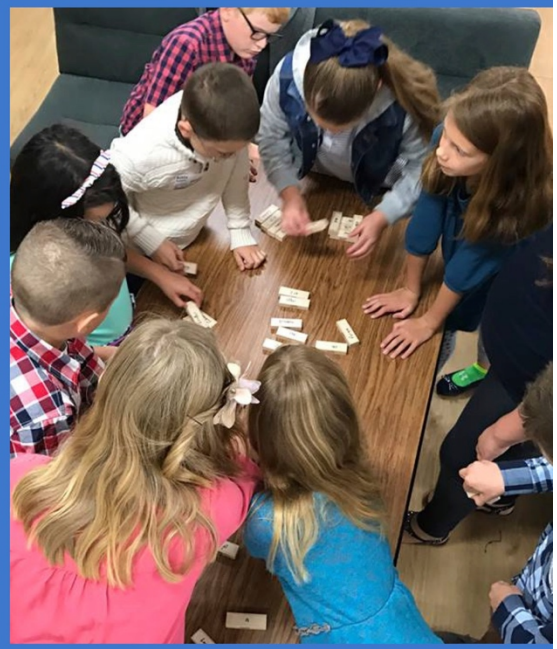
Jan 20
Jan 27
Feb 3
Feb 10
Feb 24

Session 5:
Spirit, Restoration, Growing in Grace (2)

Mar 3
Mar 10
Mar 17
Mar 24
Apr 7

F P C V
Next Gen

CATECHISM



A Catechism Experience For 9-12 Year Olds

Why Catechism?

Historically, catechisms existed for 3 reasons. The first was to set forth a comprehensive exposition of the gospel. The second purpose was to do this in such a way that the heresies, errors, and false beliefs of the time and culture were addressed and counteracted. The third purpose was to form a distinct people, a counterculture that reflected the likeness of Christ not only in individuals but also in the church community.

When the practice of catechesis is lost, the next generation does not receive a foundation of faith that will last after the completion of adolescence. This is not our desire for the next generation at First Presbyterian Church of Visalia.

What Happens When All 3 Sessions are Completed?

After successful completion of all 5 catechism sessions, children will undergo a rite of passage at a Sunday church service where the church will lay hands on them and pray for them as they cross the threshold of this new stage of faith.

What Catechism is Used?

The New City Catechism. This catechism is a modern-day catechism aimed at helping children (and adults) learn the core doctrines of the Christian faith via 52 questions and answers (as opposed to Heidelberg's 129 or Westminster Shorter's 107). The New City Catechism is based on and adapted from historical catechisms such as Calvin's Geneva Catechism, the Westminster Shorter and Larger catechisms, and especially the Heidelberg Catechism. As with most traditional catechisms, a Bible verse accompanies each question and answer. The New City Catechism has multiple resources available.

Check out www.necwcitycatechism.com for more info

We want the Word of God to dwell richly in hearts of the next generation (see Col. 3:16). The practice of catechesis does just this; it takes the truth deep into our children's hearts, so they think in biblical categories as early as possible. The gift First Pres will give the next generation is a lasting foundation of faith they can stand on and, if needed, return to in their adult years.

Sign Up for a Session

559.732.8627

charlie@firstpresvisalia.org

What is Required of Kids?

- to be on time and attend the full time for 4 out of the 5 classes in each sessions
- to complete makeup assignments for the missed classes
- to participate in each class in a constructive and age-appropriate manner
- to memorize the answer to the set questions for that specific catechism session

Each child will receive a certificate of completion for a specific catechism session when they recite by memory the answers to the session-specific catechism.

Appendix D: Confirmation Overview[1]

1. Taken and adapted from Meg Rift and Eunice McGarrahan, *Professing Our Faith: a Confirmation Curriculum*(Lexington: Congregational Ministries Publishing, a Ministry of the General Assembly Council, Congregational Ministries Division, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2015).

Confirmation Overview Part 2

19 There is a Time
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8
The people of God have always been shaped by the creating and transforming Word of God as they hear it and respond to it.

20 We Are What We Sing
Psalm 149:1
The songs we sing are particularly influential in shaping our thoughts and feelings. The Psalms are models of prayer that God's people of all times and places have set to music.

21 Nailing It
Ephesians 2:8-10
The church is reformed and always being reformed according to the word of God.

22 Shaping Up
1 Peter 2:9-10
What we believe shapes the community in which we live.

23 Glory Be!
Psalm 111:1; Isaiah 55:12; Hebrews 10:23-25
The primary purpose of our lives is to give glory to God. We learned that God wants us to be by our participation in worship.

24 Surely God is Here
Isaiah 6:1-8
Our worship flows from and depends on the holiness of God.

25 Walking Wet
Romans 6:3-4
The water of baptism stays with us throughout life and gives us a lifelong identity.

26 Taste and See
Luke 24:30-32; 1 Corinthians 11:26
We come to know Christ in the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup. We eat the bread and drink the cup because we belong to Christ.

27 Personal, Not Private
Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7
In our baptism God calls us through Christ and empowers us by the Spirit to serve one another.

28 Presby-What?
Acts 15:22; 1 Corinthians 14:40
The Presbyterian Church has a representative form of government.

29 Living Grateful Lives
Matthew 6:19-21
Stewardship describes the actions motivated by a grateful response to God.

30 Can't Keep it to Myself
Acts 2:1-8
The gospel is too good to keep to ourselves.

31 You Have a Call!
Matthew 25:37-40; Acts 1:8
Call is both personal and communal. God uses the passion of our hearts to meet the needs of others.

32 Tradition and Transformation
Ezra 3:10-13
Your church has a history and a future. You are part of your church's story.

33 I Will, With God's Help
Matthew 28:16-20
You are called, confirmed, and sent out.

34 Christmas: Glory to God
Luke 1:52-53
Mary's song announces that Jesus' coming changes the world and turns human expectations upside down.

35 Easter: I Have Seen the Lord
John 20:16-18a
Just as Christ appeared to the first followers, the risen Christ appears to us today and calls us by name.

Appendix E: Resources For Christian Practices

Resources for the Practices of the Weekly Worship Service

Chan, Simon. *Liturgical Theology: the Church as Worshiping Community*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006.

Piercy, Robert W., and Vivian E. Williams. *When Children Gather: 20 Prayer Services for the Liturgical Year*. Chicago: GIA Publications, 1997.

Stewart, Sonja M. *Young Children and Worship*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989.

The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church. Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1979.

The Worship Sourcebook. Grand Rapids: Calvin Institute of Christian worship, 2013.

Webber, Robert E. *Ancient-Future Time: Forming Spirituality through the Christian Year*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004.

Webber, Robert E. *The Services of the Christian Year*. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993.

Resources for Practices of the Bible

Cordeiro, Wayne. *The Divine Mentor: Growing Your Faith as You Sit at the Feet of the Savior*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2007.

Laidlaw, Matt. *How We Read the Bible: 8 Ways to Engage the Bible With Our Students*. Pasadena: Fuller Youth Institute, 2018.

Lloyd-Jones, Sally. *The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name*. Grand Rapids: Zonderkidz, 2009.

Peterson, Eugene H. *Eat This Book: a Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006.

Thorn, Joe. *Note to Self: the Discipline of Preaching to Yourself*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2011.

Resources for Practices of Creeds and Catechism

Barnes, M. Craig. *Body & Soul: Reclaiming the Heidelberg Catechism*. Grand Rapids: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2012.

DeYoung, Kevin. *The Good News We Almost Forgot: Rediscovering the Gospel in a 16th Century Catechism*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010.

Hansen, Collin. *The New City Catechism Devotional: God's Truth for Our Hearts and Minds*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2017.

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Appendix F: Interview Transcripts

Transcript of Interviews 1 and 2

B: 10-year-old male

K: 11-year-old female

B and K are brother and sister

Charlie: B, How old are you?

B: I am 10

Charlie: K, how old are you?

K: I'm 11

Charlie: B, What did you like most about catechism?

B: Everything.

Charlie: If you had to say one specific thing you liked, what would that be?

B: Let's see, one specific thing I liked about it? (Still no answer)

Charlie: Some people said they liked it more than Sunday school. What was maybe one thing different about it that you like?

B: It was easier. In Sunday School there is a lot of moving around and we are going from different rooms. When we are switching rooms, everyone runs from one room to the other.

K: So, what I liked about catechism is like Bobby said, I love everything about it. But the crucial thing I loved about catechism is there are not as many kids, so it's easier to focus. And people who are there usually don't run around and yell and scream and cause our eardrums to burst.

Charlie: What do you like least about catechism?

B: Nothing

K: I honestly can't think of anything.

B: Too short

K: Yeah, that's the main thing!

Charlie: How do you best remember something? If you have to remember something from school, Boy Scouts, speeches, how do you best remember stuff?

B: I best remember stuff because my dad says parts of it and then I have to memorize that. And then he says another part of it after that, and then after I'm done with that then he tells me to say the whole thing a bunch of times and when I get it correct once, he tells me to say it again three more times. And then after that then he asks a question, and then I say it. And then we do that for a while and then we go to the beginning question and he asked me that.

Charlie: So, do you remember it piece by piece and then put it together?

B: Yes. So, for example, I do the first section and then he goes to the next section. Then he will do the first section, and then he would do both sections. So, it's piece by piece, and then those two pieces combined. And then the other pieces, and those pieces combined. And then the whole thing combined.

Charlie: K, what about you. How do you best remember something?

K: So, like B said, I do the same thing with my dad. He says little pieces and I say them back to him. But, if it's for school, I usually have a little planner I can write stuff down on. If I don't have that, I just wing it.

Charlie: With your planner, does writing down help you?

K: Yes it does. Sometimes, I'm just too lazy to do it.

Charlie: Are there any other ways that help you memorize?

B: For songs I just say it a bunch of times and then listen to it. But sometimes I have to listen to it again after a week.

K: For me, if I'm listening to a song, I have to listen to a bunch of times and even mouth the words along. And then I start singing it. And that's how I remember it

B: Sometimes when I'm singing a song, I like space off and I'm still singing the song but I'm thinking about something completely different.

Charlie introduces the kids to the Likert scale and hand them a visual with the scale and tell them I just need a number with the following questions.

Charlie: I am going to read a statement and I want you to give me a number which is your answer to the statement.

B, we will start with you. I enjoyed catechism.

B: 5

K: 5

Charlie: great. I want to remind you to be honest, even if it was a two, I want to know. You won't hurt my feelings.

Charlie, the next one – I learned a lot from catechism.

B: 4

K: 4

Charlie: next one is, I feel closer to God as a result of catechism

B: 5

K: 5

Charlie: This next question deals with the 10 questions and answers of session 1 (I hand them a visual of those first 10 questions and answers). Out of those, I can recite by memory all 10 questions and answers.

B: I can recite up to 6.

K: I can recite 1 through 7 and then 9.

B: Oh yeah, I can do 7 too.

Charlie: So, what would you say to I can recite all 10 questions and answers? Would you disagree since you can recite some or would you strongly disagree, since you can't do all?

B: How about 3/neuttral? I know most of them but not all of them.

K: Actually, I think that's the best answer.

B: I know over half.

Charlie: all right, here is the last one on this scale: I can't wait for the next catechism session.

B: 5

K: 5

Charlie: B, out of these 10 questions and answers, how many can you recite without help? This means no help whatsoever.

B: 6

K: about 7

Charlie: okay, how many could you recite with help?

K: probably, maybe 8

B: I can do 7.

Charlie: how many are you not able to recite at all from memory?

K: 2

B: 3

B: Without help? Or with a little bit of help?

Charlie: At all. Meaning, you couldn't finish it.

Charlie: Two more questions. Give me some ideas on how we can help you come out on the other end being able to recite all the questions and answers. The goal of all of this is for you to be able to recite the questions and answers. How can we better able help you to memorize and recite them?

K: Like, maybe if we have a, like a, like my piano teacher, when I have practice, my teacher puts the days of the week I have to practice and I have to write how many minutes I practiced under each day. So we could do like how many minutes you studied the questions each day

Charlie: So, it's like a chart?

B: Yes, it's like a chart any mark off the days you don't do and then you write how many minutes you practiced for the days you did do.

K: Like, the questions you're having trouble on then you study those.

B: Something that would probably help, if you give them a motive, a bracelet, a toy, a plastic junky thing they want.

Charlie: Like a prize?

K: Yes, like an incentive.

Charlie: What would be a good incentive?

B: Break it down into chunks. You can start with smaller ones and build to larger ones.

K: I think that might be the best way to go.

Charlie: What are some other ways that would help you to memorize?

B: It's kind of hard for us to do because we have a lot of things going on.

K: The reason we haven't been studying art things is because we've been super busy. But like, maybe we can have like a… Maybe it would be good if there was like a little travel case that had it in its and like there was some sort of time machine that could turn back time… Oh wait we can't do that (laughing). We could have a little travel case we could take with us which could store our catechism books

Charlie: So, it would actually have the book in it?

K: It would be like a little mini, like you know those Bible cases which hold your Bible. But you can have that for your catechism book instead

Charlie: I like that idea. Would it be good if they had a clip on it, so you could clip it on your backpack and not lose it?

K: Yes

B: That would be nice!

B: Magnets might be fine but those wouldn't work very well. They would have to be very strong.

Charlie: Any other ideas? Or things that would help?

B: Not really. But what would help is can you push us a little more because most kids are like "oh yeah, we have to practice."

K: Yeah, like, "I'll do that in my free time." Which is none.

Charlie: How would I push you a little bit more? What would that look like? What would be helpful?

K: You could ask each kid individually which questions they are struggling on and then like, you could set aside like separate times to work with each kid on those questions. That might be a little bit helpful.

B: Here is another idea because in our class we have like dojo's, which is basically kind of money. These are like dojo points where if you're good and you turn stuff then, you get dojo points. Every Friday, they have a little prize basket, or little store. You can save up your points and spend them on things like "chew gum in class."

Charlie: I like that idea. What would be some of those things you would want to buy in the catechism sessions?

B: You know your prize box? You could have prizes for them and stuff.

K: We are allowed to do a lot of stuff we aren't allowed to do in school here. Or maybe, like,…

Charlie: Let's go back to prizes and then. What would be some cool prizes?

K: Like a certificate to "Me and Eds" or something.

B: You know your prize box with all your wristbands and that stuff?

Charlie: What if we had a prize box that was specific to catechism?

B: Yeah, like when someone says "catechism prize box!"

K: Maybe you can have the travel case in the box.

B: Yeah, we could do that and we could have… This is a crazy idea, and I wouldn't want to do this and it's going to be really expensive, but you could put a phone in there (laughing). It's too expensive there.

Charlie: Are there any other ideas that would help you memorize?

K: Maybe if there was like a schedule, certain days you had to practice. like set days you had to practice and if you practice those days, you might get a prize. If you practice extra days, you might get two prizes.

B: What I do, is I have a digital voice recorder and I record stuff and then I listen to it. Like 24 – seven.

K: And then he records things without people knowing. Which is very bad.

Charlie: anything else before you move on?

B: Not really

K: No. I don't have anymore.

Charlie: In a few sentences, what would make catechism a better learning experience. Not necessarily more fun, but a better learning experience.

K: Well, sometimes like, the other kids are acting up and then. Everyone, some other kids usually act up and they do disrupt the class and you have to tell them to stop and it would be a better learning environment if everyone just behaved.

B: For a better learning experience, I like the beard.

K: Some kids don't listen to it. They don't really care.

B: So, what I was thinking is taking away points if you disrupt.

Charlie: Does your teacher do that?

B: Yes.

Charlie: How would your teacher take away points?

B: She has a sheet and she just marks off points. She can also give points if people are behaving. We get taken away two points if you have to use the restroom or you push back in your chair.

K: Bobby's teacher is a very firm on the belief that kids should use recess to go to the restroom. If you need to go to the restroom during class, you get two points taken away.

B: The prizes she has aren’t too exciting and not super expensive, for what they are they are cheap. I don't like what she has and a lot of kids are in negative trillions points because they don't care about the prizes.

Charlie: What are the prizes she has?

B: She has eat lunch with the teacher in class, eat in the class with the teacher with two friends, and then there is switch seats with someone, she brings a popsicle for you at lunch, after every recess she gives you new gum, wear a hat in class, put your feet up on the desk, writing pen.

Charlie: so give me two prizes you think you would want.

K: We could get maybe, like a, because I know some of the girls are obsessed with slime. Like it could be a little slime kit may be. Or it could be like Legos maybe.

B: Oh yeah, there is this one thing that's going around with everyone. Um, bey blades. They are like these little spinning parts and you crank them up and you have two of them and they battle and whichever one stops spinning first is the loser.

K: We are not sure how expensive they are

B: I have never boughten any of them before

K: B, boughten isn't a word. It's bought.

B: Sorry. I've never bought.

Charlie: Anything else you can think of that's cool

B: Some kids like candy

K: For office supply nerds like me, I would probably do like paper and pens and like washi tape. It's like a color tape.

Charlie: Let's say we were to reward the whole group. The group goes through catechism and every one of memorized it and everyone recites it's because you are helping one another. What would be a good prize or award for the whole group?

K: Oh, maybe like, I'm not saying like you have to do this but, maybe, it would be cool if, the entire group got taken to roller town for the day. Or maybe like quantum leap.

B: Kids like Chuck E Cheese but that place is disgusting.

B: Adventure Park.

K: Yeah, maybe adventure Park. Maybe we could go to like, um, lunch.

B: All of these aren't that cheap cost wise.

Charlie: Anything else you want to add before we officially close out the interview?

K: Another thing I like about catechism is that you bring snacks. I do think if you give some kids too many candy canes then they get out of control.

Charlie: Let's go back to this briefly. You mentioned people disrupting, are there any other pieces of advice you would give me for people who are having a hard time focusing and maybe disrupting others that would be helpful?

B: Something that they would definitely not like if they are misbehaving is, do you always bring snacks?

Charlie: Yes.

B: Not getting a snack. Give them one morning and the next time say "no, no snack everyone."

K: You could give them like no free time. And they have to sit and study.

Charlie: Maybe they would have to clean stuff up

K: Yeah! That's a good idea! Or they have to stay afterwards and help you clean up. Or you can make them sit out for the entire thing. Or threaten to call their parents.

Charlie: Do you think it would be too harsh to say, one warning-talk to parents. And then say, sorry you are going to have to take this catechism session next time around. Would that be too harsh?

K: Maybe. It might be too harsh. Some kids like really can't control what they do. It's like, they just do it. You could give them like multiple warnings. The first warning could be no snack in the second warning could be you call their parents.

Charlie: What would it be like if I said, "Okay, next week, your mom or dad is coming with you."

K: Yeah! That is a good idea!

Charlie: That's not too harsh?

K: No. That is an awesome idea!

B: You could do, there's this thing that Katie's first grade teacher had…

K: Oh yeah, there's this chart and there is super student, good job, then on track, then think about it, then parental contact, and then principal's office.

B: And then you move their clips up and down. If they are good, you move them up and if they're bad, you move them down.

K: It's a clothespin. Each day starts off at on track. And then it moves up and down from there.

B: She tells the kid to move the clip.

Charlie: Is that embarrassing for the kid in front of the whole class?

K: Yes! It is so embarrassing! The one time I had to move my clip to think about it, I was so embarrassed.

B: But sometimes that has helped me before.

K: There was also this one time I was reading a book in class instead of studying and my teacher got really mad and I accidentally rolled my eyes at her and she made me sit on the wall for the entire recess. Our first-grade teacher made us sit with our backs to this wall and we couldn't have recess.

B: It's hard for us but it's not that hard. We get to look at everyone playing. The thing is you also have to do work.

K: You're watching everyone else play on the playground. If you got off the wall, you would get extra time.

Transcript of Interview 4

M: 11-year-old female

Charlie: How old are you?

M: 11

Charlie: What did you like most about catechism?

M: Learning new things with my friends.

Charlie: What did you like least about catechism?

M: Like, what we learned or like…?

Charlie: The whole thing. It can be anything.

M: I didn't really like how like, the people, were like running around all the time. And like, you had to tell them to stop.

Charlie: How does that affect you?

M: Um, it distracts me.

Charlie: How do you best remember things?

M: Writing it down.

Charlie: Are there any other things that help?

M: Like saying it like 10 times in my head.

Charlie: Anything else?

M: No. Not really.

Charlie: *Hands child visual of scale and walks them through the Likert scale.* Remember, I want you to be honest here. The first statement is: I enjoyed catechism

M: 4

Charlie: I learned a lot from catechism

M: 3.5

Charlie: tell me about that. Why?

M: Some things I didn't remember in my head. So, like, if you asked me to say them right now, I couldn't really do that. So, like I have to have like a refresher, you know.

Charlie: I feel closer to God as a result of catechism.

M: 5

Charlie: Tell me about that.

M: Well, it helped me understand more about him and his ways.

Charlie: This next question has to do with the first 10 questions. I can recite, from memory, all 10 questions and answers from this session's catechism.

M: 2

Charlie: Why 2?

M: Um, because like off the top of my head, I can't really say them.

Charlie: How many can you recite without help out of the 10?

M: Probably, like five.

Charlie: How many could you have recited with help?

M: Like, 6. Just like the first 6. Then like the long ones, I could not.

Charlie: So how many could you not recite at all?

M: Probably 8, 9, and 10. I could learn seven but seven is kind of long.

Charlie: I can't wait to go to the next catechism session.

M: 4

Charlie: Why 4?

M: Um, to learn more and like remember everything so I have it in my head for when I'm older. And I don't have to learn it, like again.

Charlie: Would it have helped to do a review session at some point in time where we meet and we do fun activities to help memorize them?

M: Yes, that would help. But I think it should be a little less than an hour or so kids don't get distracted.

Charlie: So, what you think? How long should it be?

M: 35 minutes

Charlie: How could I help you better remember the questions and answers?

M: Maybe, like, focus on five every session and try to memorize those each time.

Charlie: What would that look like?

M: You know how we do like the flashcards in church with the memory verses? We could do it with these and you could put out the different verses and see if people know them.

Charlie: Are there any other ways we can better help you remember?

M: No. That's it.

Charlie: What about on your time? Let's say we are not a church, are there things we can have or give you, tools, to help you memorize during the week?

M: Um, well you already have like the little book and the little flashcards. Because my mom kind of learned, kind of wants to learn them with me, so me and her could go over it if we have time.

Charlie: So, the book and the flashcards help. Is there anything else we can have?

M: No.

Charlie: in 1 to 2 sentences, what would make catechism a better learning experience?

M: Maybe having, like, less people so it's not as distracting.

Charlie: So, what would be a good number?

M: Like, 4, 5 or 6.

Charlie: We had seven in this last session. Would you say it's about less people or…

M: Probably, the people.

Charlie: What would you suggest with those kids having a tougher time paying attention and distracting others? What would be your advice to me?

M: I don't know, because sometimes, you know how you put the bins of pens out and they start playing with them? That's distracting. And like, not put stuff out. Just have the journal and that's it. But it's like, you keep the pens in the middle and when you want to write, you have to grab it but then put it back.

Charlie: Anything else?

M: No

Charlie: Let's say we have a kid that comes in they are clearly having a hard time and distracting others?

M: Um, maybe you could like go outside and talk to them about it and like, see what's wrong, like what they need you to do to fix it.

Charlie: Good. Let's say we do that and they keep doing it?

M: Then you direct them out of the class.

Charlie: So, basically say, this isn't working?

M: Yes.

M: There are kids at my school who will like it do anything for attention, like act dumb when they are really actually smart and I'm like, why? Why are you doing that if you're smart?

Charlie: Do you think it would work if I made it a condition for a disrupting kid to have to bring a parent if they want to come back and complete the catechism session?

M: Yeah. That would be a good idea.

Charlie: Would that disrupt other people?

M: No.

Charlie: Any other thoughts or advice on that?

M: No

Charlie: What else would make it a better learning experience?

M: Maybe like moving learning places. Like different room so that we have a new setting.

Charlie: how does that help you?

M: Well, I kind of get tired sitting in one place for a long time. So like moving around would be good for me.

Charlie: What else?

Charlie: Did you like having snacks?

M: Yes

Charlie: You don't think snacks distract from the learning experience?

M: No.

Charlie: Anything else?

M: No

Charlie: If we were to do catechism memory refreshers, when would be a good time to do that?

M: Um, maybe like, um, after church. Or even on like Wednesday nights.

Charlie: Anything else you want to tell me as it relates to catechism?

M: I don't really have anything. It was a pretty good experience overall.

Transcript of Interviews 4 and 5

A: 11-year-old female

N: 10-year-old female

A and N are sisters

Charlie: A, How old are you?

A: 11

Charlie: What did you like most about catechism?

A: The games we did.

Charlie: N, how old are you?

N: 10

Charlie: What did you like most about catechism?

N: I liked how you always made it fun.

Charlie: What did you like least about catechism?

A: I don't really like the memorizing part.

Charlie: What don't you like about it?

A: Well, I'm not very good at it.

Charlie: N, what did you like least about catechism?

N: I also didn't like memorizing because it's also hard to remember we have to do it. Like if you lose the stuff for it, maybe like it could be hard to remember. Also, when we were playing the judge game, I wanted to be one of the parts that the other people were.

Charlie: A, How do you best remember something?

A: Um, I tried to repeat it over and over so it sticks in my head. Also singing helps too.

Charlie: N, how do you best remember something?

A: Kind of the same as A. Today we were listening to music and it was easy to remember because sometimes the songs are catchy, like the songs in catechism, so it's easy to remember them. Repeating them over or having something that says the questions and answers.

Charlie: is there anything else that helps?

N: Maybe to spend more time going over the questions and answers in catechism.

Kids shown Likert scale and told to respond based on the statements.

Charlie: A, I enjoyed catechism.

A: 4.

Charlie: What would make it a 5?

A: Um, do a little more games and spending a little bit more time on the questions. More time going over each question.

Charlie: N, I enjoyed catechism.

N: kind of, I think it would be a 3.

Charlie: What would make it a 4?

N: Like, maybe, like, to be able to get more ways to memorize stuff. If we are doing something, it's distracting to have music in the background and it's hard to memorize them if we're doing something else. It's also hard to memorize stuff sometimes.

Charlie: A, I learned a lot from catechism.

A: 5

Charlie: Why 5?

A: I learned that everyone is born with sin and the like, we can't escape the sin and stuff like that.

Charlie: N, I learned a lot from catechism.

N: I would probably make it a 4 because a lot of the questions I didn't understand. And some things I asked my parents and they don't have answers and sometimes you don't have answers and sometimes we just don't know. But sometimes when I asked questions that are related to other ones, it's kind of hard to if we want to know the answer, to know because we just don't have the answer and you can explain it that well.

Charlie: A, I feel closer to God as a result of catechism.

A: 5.

Charlie: Why 5?

A: because I feel like I understand him more and his rules and everything.

Charlie: N, I feel closer to God as a result of catechism.

N: well, I think it would be a 4 because I have a lot of questions and sometimes we can't answer them all so those questions help me get farther to knowing God but I learned a lot in catechism but I also feel like it would help to just be able to get answers to the questions that we have.

Charlie: A, I can recite all 10 question and answers from memory.

A: 3. I cannot recite eight or nine or 10 from memory but I can recite about the first six. Definitely one, two and three.

Charlie: N, I can recite all 10 questions and answers from memory.

N: it's kind of hard to choose because, I mean most of them I can't recite especially eight. Sometimes it's hard because we learned a lot of other ones after. A lot of them I can't recite by hearts.

Charlie: So how would you respond to this statement?

N: two or three, I can't really choose.

Charlie: A, I cannot wait to go to the next catechism session

A: I'm going to have to say 3 on this one.

Charlie: Why 3?

A: Because it's the memorizing part that I don't really want to do again. But I'm looking forward to everything else.

Charlie: N, the statement is I can't wait to go to the next catechism session.

N: I probably would choose, um, 3 because I like everything in it, how it's fun, but I don't like having to memorize it and like sometimes how the games are and sometimes we have to do the same ones. Sometimes I don't agree with what we're doing.

Charlie: A, how many of the 10 catechism question and answers can you recite without help?

A: Um, one, two, three and maybe four and five.

Charlie: So 5?

A: Yes.

Charlie: N, what about you?

N: Um, 6 and 3 maybe. 1 was hard to remember. But, I don’t know. Probably 2.

Charlie: A, how many could you recite with help?

A: 9 and 10. 7. And 5.

Charlie: So 4?

A: Yes.

Charlie: A, So that would leave one you couldn't do it all?

A: yes, that would be number eight.

Charlie: N, out of the 10 question and answers, how many could you recite with help?

N: Well, maybe like the ones at the beginning. Let’s say 2-3 with help.

Charlie: A, what could we do to help you better remember the questions and answers?

A: . Maybe repeat them. Do them more times.

Charlie: N, what could we do to help you better remember the questions and answers?

N: probably two, like, I mean, we spend a lot of time making sure that we know what each question means but then when it comes to memorizing, you remember what each question means, but you don't remember the questions and answers. It's hard. We should spend an equal amount of time on memorizing and understanding.

Charlie: what would this practically look like?

N: maybe when it comes to breaks, I think breaks take up 15 minutes in the hour. So there's only 45 minutes to memorize and make sure we understand the questions. So even though the 15 minutes goes by so fast, it could be seven minutes.

Charlie: so, are you suggesting we make the break shorter?

N: If we go too fast through it were not to learn anything. But the point is to learn stuff and to be able to memorize things. So, I don't know. Maybe spend less time on breaks or if it's easier for us to memorize, maybe just no breaks.

Charlie: In 1 to 2 sentences, what would make catechism a better learning experience?

A: Like Noel said, if we can spend more time on thinking and memorizing, then maybe it could click better. So just like more time on memorization and understanding what the question means. Because if we can understand it, maybe we can like, piece it together more.

Charlie: would it be more helpful to do more memorizing in class?

A: yes. That would help.

N: well, I think sometimes when I see a pile of stuff or have so much I need to get done, or it so much, I get kind of angry or overwhelmed. Maybe we need to spend more time learning the questions, but I don't know because I want to be able to memorize them. But I also want to be able to know the meanings. What is the question?

Charlie: In 1 to 2 sentences, what would make catechism a better learning experience?

N: to be able to learn the questions, spend an equal amount of memorizing. Because we want to be up to memorize and learn them. Spend an equal amount of learning and memorizing but if you play the music while you were doing something independently, that doesn't necessarily help too much because were focused on something else. But, it's just maybe spend an equal amount or

more time on one of them, or an equal amount. We want to be able to learn it but the point is to memorize it and learn it.

Charlie: do you like the idea of memorization parties?

N: I think it would be fun because then we could remember what we talked about.

A; Yes. That would be great!

Appendix G: Additional Resources for Ministry Model Practices

BEFORE AGE 7

Memorize:

The Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer Song by Saddleback Kids

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijPuAtrwHYM

The Lord's Prayer Hand Motions by Saddleback Kids:

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZqQMxMWXJ7E

Primary Practices:

The Jesus Storybook Bible

- https://www.amazon.com/Jesus-Storybook-Bible-Every-Whispers-ebook/dp/B00GLLP7TG/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=jesus+storybook+bible&qid=1560317719&s=gateway&sr=8-1

The Jesus Storybook Bible Videos

- https://www.christianbook.com/jesus-storybook-bible-video-downloads-bundle/pd/559745

Secondary Practices:

Meditation on Key Parables

Found in "The Religious Potential of the Child: Experiencing Scripture and Liturgy With Young Children." Pages 66-67 and 112.

- https://www.amazon.com/Religious-Potential-Child-Experiencing-Scripture/dp/0929650670/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=sofia+cavalletti&qid=1560317872&s=gateway&sr=8-1

The Parable of the Good Shepherd Meditation Exercise

- https://www.orthodoxcatechismproject.org/age-4-5-years/-/asset_publisher/sVl6TXix4npP/content/parable-of-the-good-shepherd?inheritRedirect=false&redirect=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.orthodoxcatechismproject.org%2Fage-4-5-years%3Fp_p_id%3D101_INSTANCE_sVl6TXix4npP%26p_p_lifecycle%3D0%26p_p_state%3Dnormal%26p_p_mode%3Dview%26p_p_col_id%3Dcolumn-1%26p_p_col_count%3D1

Parable of the Mustard Seed Meditation Exercise

- https://www.orthodoxcatechismproject.org/age-4-5-years/-/asset_publisher/sVl6TXix4npP/content/parable-of-the-mustard-seed?inheritRedirect=false&redirect=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.orthodoxcatechismproject.org%2Fage-4-5-years%3Fp_p_id%3D101_INSTANCE_sVl6TXix4npP%26p_p_lifecycle%3D0%26p_p_state%3Dnormal%26p_p_mode%3Dview%26p_p_col_id%3Dcolumn-1%26p_p_col_count%3D1

Parable of the Lost and Found Sheep Meditation Exercise

- https://www.orthodoxcatechismproject.org/age-4-5-years/-/asset_publisher/sVl6TXix4npP/content/parable-of-the-lost-and-found-sheep?inheritRedirect=false&redirect=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.orthodoxcatechismproject.org%2Fage-4-5-years%3Fp_p_id%3D101_INSTANCE_sVl6TXix4npP%26p_p_lifecycle%3D0%26p_p_state%3Dnormal%26p_p_mode%3Dview%26p_p_col_id%3Dcolumn-1%26p_p_col_count%3D1

Clay Figurines

- http://www.pictureitinclay.com/catechesis-of-the-good-shepherd.html

7-9 YEARS OLD

Training/Experience:

Communion Workshop

"One Bread, One Cup, One People: An Intergenerational Event on the Lord's Supper" (see Appendix A for a modified form of this workshop).

- https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/onebreadonecuponepeople.pdf

Memorize:

Books of the Bible

Bigsby Books of the Bible Song

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixMvFdeo-F0 (listen)
- https://gumroad.com/bigsby (purchase)

The Apostles' Creed

The Apostles' Creed Song (sung by Randy Fuller)

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJ_hJxHECZI
- https://music.apple.com/us/album/the-apostles-creed-single/1031325071

Primary Practices:

Bible Reading Plan (New Testament only for this age)

Bible Reading Plan in YouVersion Bible app

- https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/3-life-journal-reading-plan

Downloadable PDF of Plan:

- https://www.blueletterbible.org/assets/pdf/dbrp/1Yr_LifeJournalPlan.pdf

Secondary Practices:

Hospitality

Hospitality - Ways to Practice – Ideas

- http://www.practicingourfaith.org/hospitality-ways-practice-ideas.html

Spiritual Disciplines for Real Families: 13 Simple Ways to Teach Hospitality (a blog post by Janel Breitenstein)

- https://www.agenerousgrace.com/2017/09/28/spiritual-disciplines-families-hospitality/

Service

Service: Teaching Kids Spiritual Disciplines

- https://kidsministry.lifeway.com/2014/01/07/service-teaching-kids-spiritual-disciplines/

9-12 YEARS OLD

Training/Experience & Memorize

The New City Catechism

The New City Catechism Kids' Curriculum Kit
- https://www.amazon.com/New-City-Catechism-Curriculum-Kit/dp/1433555115

The New City Catechism for Kids: Children's Edition
- https://www.amazon.com/New-City-Catechism-Kids-Curriculum/dp/1433561298/ref=sr_1_3?qid=1560392143&refinements=p_27%3AGospel+Coalition&s=books&sr=1-3&text=Gospel+Coalition

The New City Catechism iPhone App
- https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/new-city-catechism/id564035762

The New City Catechism Android App
- https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.crossway.newcitycatechism

The New City Catechism Web App
- http://newcitycatechism.com/new-city-catechism/#1

The New City Catechism Songs (listen)
- https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLPwoFK1MBpm4ClBAJbmfp3Lj0Z45yntcH

The New City Catechism Songs Questions 1-15 (download)
- https://thegospelcoalition.bandcamp.com/album/songs-from-the-new-city-catechism

The New City Catechism Songs Questions 16-31 (download)
- https://thegospelcoalition.bandcamp.com/album/more-songs-from-the-new-city-catechism

The New City Catechism Songs Questions 32-41 (download)
- https://thegospelcoalition.bandcamp.com/album/songs-from-the-new-city-catechism-3

The New City Catechism Songs Questions 41-52 (download)
- https://thegospelcoalition.bandcamp.com/album/songs-from-the-new-city-catechism-4

Primary Practices

The Life Journal (New Testament plan only)

Bible Reading Plan (NT only) YouVersion/Bible app
- https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/3-life-journal-reading-plan

Downloadable PDF of Plan:
- https://www.blueletterbible.org/assets/pdf/dbrp/1Yr_LifeJournalPlan.pdf

Downloadable PDF of Instructions and Plan:
- https://static1.squarespace.com/static/559a357de4b0eb5f83876188/t/55f2b11fe4b078c961796ba2/1441968415131/Life+Journal+Reading+plan.pdf

Children's Life Journals
- https://www.liferesources.cc/childrens-life-journal/

Adult Life Journals
- https://www.liferesources.cc/life-journal-notebook/

Fixed Hour Prayer (kid-friendly)

"This is What I Pray: Divine Hours for Children" by Phyllis Tickle
- https://www.amazon.com/This-What-Pray-Today-Children/dp/0525478280/ref=sr_1_5?keywords=phyllis+tickle+children&qid=1560392945&s=gateway&sr=8-5

"Psalms for Young Children" by Marie-Helene Delval
- https://www.amazon.com/Psalms-Young-Children-Marie-Helene-Delval/dp/0802853226/ref=sr_1_1?qid=1560393480&refinements=p_27%3AMarie-Helene+Delval&s=books&sr=1-1&text=Marie-Helene+Delval

"A Book of Prayers for Kids" by Mel Lawrenz

- https://www.amazon.com/Book-Prayers-Kids-ways-every/dp/099740633X/ref=sr_1_3?keywords=prayers+for+kids&qid=1560393336&s=gateway&sr=8-3

Secondary Practices

Forgiveness/Reconciliation

Forgiveness - Ways to Practice - Ideas

- http://www.practicingourfaith.org/forgiveness-ways-practice-ideas.html

The Practice of Praying for Your Enemies found on page 83 of Trevor Hudson's Book "Discovering Our Spiritual Identity: Practices for God's Beloved" (see page 238 of this study for a modified form of this).

- https://www.amazon.com/Discovering-Our-Spiritual-Identity-Practices/dp/0830810927/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=1560410655&sr=8-1

Teaching Your Kids About Forgiveness

- https://growingfaith.com.au/parenting/teaching-your-kids-about-forgiveness

Service/Renewed Working

25 Low-Prep Service Projects That Will Teach Kids Gratitude (a blog post)

- https://wearethatfamily.com/2016/02/25-low-prep-service-projects-that-will-teach-kids-gratitude/

8 Spiritual Disciplines: Five-Service

- https://www.lettinghislightshine.com/8-spiritual-disciplines-five-service/

13-16 YEARS OLD

Training/Experience:

Confirmation

Professing Our Faith: A Confirmation Curriculum, Teacher's Book

- https://www.pcusastore.com/Products/623008/professing-our-faith-a-confirmation-curriculum-teachers-book.aspx

Professing Our Faith: A Confirmation Curriculum, Student's Notebook (35 Session)

- https://www.pcusastore.com/Products/623009/professing-our-faith-a-confirmation-curriculum-students-notebook-35-session.aspx

Professing Our Faith: A Confirmation Curriculum, Student's Notebook (8 Session)

- https://www.pcusastore.com/Products/623010/professing-our-faith-a-confirmation-curriculum-students-notebook-8-session.aspx

Memorize:

The Story Bible Verses:

"Visual Theology: Seeing and Understanding the Truth About God" by Tim Challies (pages 64-77):

- https://www.amazon.com/Visual-Theology-Seeing-Understanding-Truth/dp/0310520436/ref=sr_1_2?keywords=tim+challies+visual+theology&qid=1560394207&s=gateway&sr=8-2

The Bible Project Videos (a great supplement to teaching the entire Bible story)

- https://thebibleproject.com/explore/

Primary Practices:

Praying in Color

An Instructional Overview

- https://prayingincolor.com/praying-in-color-praying-in-black-and-white

An Instructional Handout:

- https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B2X6uTHtFUruVlpieDcxcC0zRmc/view?usp=sharing

An Instructional Handout (for intercessory prayer):

- https://drive.google.com/file/d/1T2hWu_W2r23Pl7KMW-OFRqSkIagsM8PC/view

Examples of Praying in Color

- https://prayingincolor.com/examples

"Praying in Color: Drawing a New Path to God (Active Prayer)" Book by Sybil MacBeth

- https://www.amazon.com/Praying-Color-Drawing-Active-Prayer/dp/1557255121/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=praying+in+color&qid=1560394641&s=gateway&sr=8-1

"Praying in Color Kid's Edition" Book by Sybil MacBeth

- https://www.amazon.com/Praying-Color-Kids-Sybil-MacBeth/dp/1557255954/ref=sr_1_3?keywords=praying+in+color&qid=1560394641&s=gateway&sr=8-3

The Jesus Creed

"The Jesus Creed: Loving God, Loving Others" Book by Scot McKnight

- https://www.amazon.com/Jesus-Creed-Loving-Others-Anniversary-ebook/dp/B00U1OL02W/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=jesus+creed+scot+mcknight&qid=1560395236&s=books&sr=1-1

"The Jesus Creed for Students: Loving God and Loving Others" Book by Scot McKnight:

- https://www.amazon.com/Jesus-Creed-Students-Loving-Others/dp/155725883X/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=1560395054&sr=1-5

"The Jesus Creed for Students" DVD

- https://www.thefoundrypublishing.com/the-jesus-creed-for-students-dvd-9781612610757.html

Secondary Practices:

Simplicity/Self-Denial

Spiritual Disciplines for Real Families: 10 Practical Ways to Teach Simplicity

- https://www.janelbreitenstein.com/2016/11/29/spiritual-disciplines-real-families-10-practical-ways-simplicity/

Simplicity—Sticky Faith: 8 Weeks of Noticing God More Free Download (see week 5 entitled "Simplify")

- https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/assets/fyi-files/SF_Everyday_V5.pdf

Fasting: Teaching Kids Spiritual Disciplines (a blog post)

- https://kidsministry.lifeway.com/2014/01/02/fasting-teaching-kids-spiritual-disciplines/

Disentangle from Cultural Liturgies

How To Use Your Head To Guard Your Heart: A 3(D) Guide To Making Wise Media Choices

- https://cpyuresourcecenter.org/product/how-to-use-your-head-to-guard-your-heart-a-3d-guide-to-making-wise-media-choices-10-pack/

Leader's Guide: How To Use Your Head To Guard Your Heart: A 3(D) Guide To Making Wise Media Choices (free download)

- https://cpyu.org/resource/3d-guide-leaders-guide/

16-19 YEARS OLD

Training/Experience:

Graduation Weekend Resources

"Moving On" Interactive Workbook—Help Students Map Out The Next Steps For Their Future Based On The Formula Burden+Passion+Vision=Mission:

- https://www.leadertreks.org/store/moving-on/

"Leadership Pathway"—A Step-By-Step Guide To Developing Leaders:

- https://www.leadertreks.org/store/leadership-pathway/

Leadership Bundle: "Student Leaders Start Here" and "I am a Leader:"

- https://www.leadertreks.org/store/leadership-bundle/

Primary Practices:

Valsteras Method

An Instructional Blog Post on the Method

- https://www.challies.com/christian-living/faith-hacking-the-swedish-method/

A Critical and Biblical Analysis of the Method

- https://matthiasmedia.com/briefing/2009/01/the-swedish-method/

The Valsteras Method and WhatsApp

- https://gotherefor.com/offer.php?intid=29664

A PDF Handout and Instructions

- https://clarety-matthiasmedia.s3.amazonaws.com/userimages/swedishbiblestudyhandout-gtf.pdf

Practicing the Presence of God

Practicing God's Presence: Brother Lawrence for Today's Reader—Quiet Times for the Heart (a book)

- https://www.amazon.com/Practicing-Gods-Presence-Brother-Lawrence/dp/157683655X/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=1560400660&sr=1-6
- The Practice of the Presence of God (free downloads): https://www.ccel.org/ccel/lawrence/practice.html

Life in the Presence of God: Practices for Living in Light of Eternity (a book by Kenneth Boa):

- https://www.amazon.com/Life-Presence-God-Practices-Eternity/dp/083084516X/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=1560400660&sr=1-3

A Companion Guide to Life in the Presence of God (a free downloadable resource)

- https://www.ivpress.com/Media/Default/Discussion-Guides/4516-training-guide.pdf

Secondary Practices:

Discernment

Individual Discernment; a practice taken from page 105 of Dorothy Bass' book "Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People" (see pages 241-242 of this study for a modified form of this practice)

- https://www.amazon.com/Practicing-Our-Faith-Searching-Practices/dp/1506454739/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=1560410076&sr=8-1

Discernment - Ways to Practice - Ideas

- http://www.practicingourfaith.org/discernment-ways-practice-ideas.html

Teaching Teens Discernment

- https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/teach-teens-discernment/

Rest/Sabbath Keeping

Keeping Sabbath - Ways to Practice – Ideas

- http://www.practicingourfaith.org/keeping-sabbath-ways-practice-ideas.html

The practice of slowing: taken from pages 89-96 of John Ortberg's book titled "The Life You've Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People." See page 244 of this study for an overview of this practice.

- https://www.amazon.com/Life-Youve-Always-Wanted-Disciplines/dp/0310342074/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=1560413985&sr=8-1

The practice of rest/sleep: blog post: "The Most Needed Teen Spiritual Discipline"

- https://www.inword.org/the-most-needed-teen-spiritual-discipline/

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TOOLS

- Leading From Your Strengths Assessment (Ministry Insights Inc)
- Ministry Coaching International (trained & certified)
- Strengthsfinder 2.0
- Standout 2.0 Assessment
- Best staff practices: interviewing, hiring, management, evaluation and corrective practices for church staff.

SKILLS AND INTERESTS

- Speaker for youth camps, events and mission trips
- Preacher for church services and family camps
- Coach for pastors
- Musician and worship leader
- Former paramedic
- Enjoy running, playing hockey, reading, traveling and spending time with friends and family.

EDUCATION

Doctor of Ministry, Ministry to Emerging Generations
Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary
Expected Graduation: January 2020

Master of Divinity
Western Seminary
Graduated with Highest Honors, 1999

Bachelor of Sciences in Physiology
University of California at Davis
Minor in Religious Studies, 1992

EXPERIENCE

Sep 2016 - Present — **First Presbyterian Church**
Pastor to Emerging Generations
Responsible for programs and pastoral care of kids, youth and young adults; oversee media; assist with preaching

Jan 2010 - Sep 2016 — **Mount Hermon Association**
Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries
Responsible for the planning and implementation of camps and programs for youth and young adults impacting over 5,000 people; oversight of 75 paid staff and budget of $500,000

Sep 1998 - Dec 2009 — **Twin Lakes Church**
Pastor to Students and the Genesis Community
Responsible for programs and pastoral care of high school and college students; preach and lead weekly venue service; oversight of 10 paid staff, 100 lay leaders and 400 students and young adults

Sep 1999 - Dec 2010 — **William Jessup University**
Adjunct Professor and Program Liaison
Teach New Testament, Old Testament, Biblical Ethics, Hermeneutics, Leadership and Preaching to college students of all ages; mentor students providing academic and spiritual support

CERTIFICATIONS AND TRAINING

Ordained Minister
Evangel Ministerial Association INc.

Church Consultant and Coach
Strategic Leaders Group

Certified Trainer
Ministry Insights Inc.